takes place as a person shapes and reshapes ideas with words. According to Britton, learning is a process of knowing rather than a storehouse of the known. Elbow’s believing game includes such activities as believing what others say, reading and responding with empathy instead of defense, describing rather than arguing and judging, making metaphors, and delaying closure.

Students recorded and assessed their expressive writing daily in Writers' Notebooks (journals with neutral names). They responded to open-ended prompts, which I designed primarily to facilitate learning professional writing rather than to serve as prewriting for letters and reports. Through self-assessment, students owned their own writing, viewed learning as an active process, monitored clear ideas emerging from chaos, and tracked writer-based writing becoming reader-based writing.

In keeping with the believing game, my goal for each response was to focus on the immediate meaning-making; describing, not judging, emphasizing the positive; and nurturing an evolving dialogue—not initially an easy task, for the students' writing was expressive. Writing the responses on post-it notes reinforced students' ownership of their writing.

As self-assessment continued during the semester, students increased their self-esteem, increased their confidence about writing and computers, developed control of their writing behavior and feelings, and improved their writing.

DEVELOPING PORTFOLIOS FOR BARRIER TESTING: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

Dennis C. Holt and Nancy Westrich Baker, Southeast Missouri State University

At Southeast Missouri State University, all students must pass a test of writing proficiency in order to graduate. Students take the test, a two-part, holistically scored essay exam, after completing 75 credit hours. Because English composition classes emphasize process and revision and because writing across the curriculum promotes the importance of writing in context, we added a portfolio option. We believe that students deserve the opportunity to demonstrate writing proficiency with writing samples that have been produced on a subject of their own choosing, with time allowed for revision.

The portfolio option, now in its pilot stage, is available to students who have failed the proficiency exam and believe that time constraints, prompt topic, or personal variables prevented them from demonstrating their true level of proficiency. The portfolio must contain a minimum of four samples of writing representing several specified modes of discourse and a spontaneous one-page analysis of the samples. It can be complete in one of three ways: by collecting writing from several different courses, by compiling a portfolio in intermediate composition, or by writing essays at three separate untimed sittings in one semester.

We have confronted the problems of authenticating students' writing samples and ensuring that portfolio evaluation is governed by fair and consistent standards. We have addressed these problems by developing certification sheets and discourse-specific scoring guides. The one-page sample analysis also serves to authenticate students' writing. Although portfolio evaluation involves a considerable expenditure of time and money, our initial experience indicates that the portfolio has the potential to be a viable option to the essay exam.

WRITING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT ACROSS A SCHOOL SYSTEM

David Kneselar, East York Board of Education

Over ten years ago, The East York Board of Education sanctioned the use of writing folders across the system for grades JK to 10. At the request of the Senior Heads of English, the final step was taken about four years ago and Senior Writing portfolios were mandated by the English Subject Council to be used from grades 11 to O.A.C. (Ontario Academic Credit—the college preparation year). As a result of these decisions, East York's Writing Folders are used in every classroom across the system.

In this session, participants examined multiple draft writing samples, which illustrate
the Writing Folder System. These folders support the writing process goals of our Programme Department by providing printed information for students to guide them in dimensions such as topic choice, revision, editing, proofreading and publishing. Folders also contain quotes, definitions of technical terms, tracking strategies, and reading-writing connections. Separate pockets on each folder provide storage space for writing in various stages of development from semantic webbing of tentative ideas, to ideas in draft stages, to final published copies ready for evaluation.

The structure and organization of the folders change over the grades to match the growing insights and experience of students. Each of the four folders is geared to support the understanding of the user while at the same time supporting overall programme consistency and system goals. Each folder is developed to span four years and reflect writing progress over four grades. When students change grades or schools, the writing portfolios travel with them. While folders contain the writing that takes place during the course of any one term or semester, they also capture the highlights of the finest writing from previous grades. This repository of excellence reflects the pattern of individual growth over the years. Teachers receiving new students in September have a ready window on individual writers' capabilities and the kinds of topics, genres, techniques and strategies that students have attempted or mastered in previous grades. Diagnostic evaluation as a fundamental tool of informed teaching is facilitated by this ready reference.

Current research, conducted in various classrooms, is examining revision in greater depth. Teachers have begun to collect drafts that reveal revision at work—thoughts altered, refined, developed as the writer clarifies ideas. Our current research focuses on the difference between surface-structure revision that touches up writing cosmetics and deep-structure revision that improves thought patterns and structure. While the NTTNW conference opened the door to this line of thought, the next few years will undoubtedly provide further insights, which may be shared at future conferences.

Portfolios Evolving: Background and Variations

Roberta Camp, Educational Testing Service
Denise Stavis Levine, Lehman College, CUNY

In the first part of the presentation, we outlined the changes in research and practice that have led to the current interest in portfolio approaches to writing assessment. We identified four kinds of changes: in the prevailing views of writing and writing instruction, in models and goals for assessment, in teachers' roles in curriculum development and assessment, and in students' roles as learners.

There is great diversity among models for portfolio assessments designed for different purposes and contexts, but certain features are common to portfolios responsive to the changes identified earlier: multiple samples of writing, variety in the kinds of writing represented, evidence of processes used to create text, and student reflection on writing. We emphasized reflection as the feature that most distinguishes portfolios from other approaches to writing assessment and affords greatest opportunities for impact on instruction and learning.

Next, we illustrated the kinds of information about learning made available through portfolios and the kinds of difficulties that occur in the development of a portfolio design. We emphasized the exploratory nature of the projects described and the need for other portfolio projects to discover the approaches most appropriate to their situations.

We described the process used in the New York City Junior High School Writing and Learning Project to develop an appropriate and informative approach for portfolios of writing drawn from across the curriculum. First the purpose of the portfolio was established: to encourage students to show and become aware of the ways in which they use writing as a tool for learning and of changes in the ways they use writing strategies. Teachers participating in the project then articulated the underlying principles that characterized their classroom instruction in writing, and these principles became the basis for a series of guideline questions for students to use in selecting pieces of writing for their portfolios.