self-reflective but gradually learn to assess or judge their own writing for its effectiveness in communicating to specific groups of people. The overall goal of peer tutors is to focus on the value of writing as a means of making meaning and communicating that meaning: with a meaningful goal like this, peer writers have a motive to monitor and assess their own writing.

Writing centers staffed with peer tutors are particularly well-equipped to assist the student through the assessment process because peer tutors are nonauthoritarian and do not belong to the institution of experts that has designed the assessment guidelines. Well-trained and supervised peer tutors, in fact, are in an excellent position to mediate between the student and the assessing institution. If peer tutors from diverse disciplines are trained to view the making and communicating of meaning as the most important goals in their collaboration with student writers, they can stimulate and reinforce these writers’ self-reflectiveness and ability to assess what they are writing. Moreover, peer tutors may also be in a better position to encourage self-assessment in a peer’s writing process than teachers or other assessors, in part because peer tutors are less threatening to students than are teachers.

The remainder of the session described the ways in which peer tutors can help students improve their self-assessment abilities in light of the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP), a state-wide program of writing, reading, and mathematical skills.

CLASSROOM EVALUATION MEASURES: STUDENTS AS PARTNERS IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Nina Mikkelsen, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

For the past three years faculty and students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania have been building criteria for assessment. It has been my goal in supervising this project to find a better way of evaluating students so that grade anxiety is reduced at the same time levels of performance and production remain high.

Each semester, students are encouraged to investigate professional and peer writing to determine what they themselves value in writing. We train students in writing to learn, because self-discovery through writing promotes greater interest in writing, more frequent writing, and ultimately greater strength in writing. In order to promote writing to learn, or discovery writing, I have most recently implemented several strategies designed to bolster confidence, expertise, and incentive for writing: response journals, a three-point scoring system that proceeds developmentally as the course progresses to assess categories of writing, and a three-part "paper" for each assignment, derived from Elbow’s concept of a reader’s and a writer’s draft. Only one part is scored (the reader’s draft), but the other two parts (a writer’s draft and a story of the story process report) enable peer reviewers and the teacher to provide better feedback to the writer.

Finally, we help students to become more proficient in self-assessment because writers know instinctively what is and is not working in a paper. Several questionnaires have been used with students to help them (and me) see what they are feeling about the papers they are writing and to help them determine where they think they stand in relation to the criteria of writing they have helped to establish. Eventually as the semester progresses, the students can take over their own evaluation procedures so that they know how they are progressing, not only at the completion of a paper but also as they are writing it.

JAMES BRITTON, PETER ELBOW, AND STUDENTS’ SELF-ASSESSMENT

Nancy T. Zuercher, University of South Dakota

This presentation described how students in a professional writing class, which met in a computer-networked writing classroom, assessed their own learning. Strategies for self-assessment were based on James Britton’s expressive writing and Peter Elbow’s believing game.

Expressive writing, the core from which all other writing develops, is the language of written speech which, over time, can show how learning
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