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 (TASIP), a state-wide program of writing, reading, and mathematical skills.

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.

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.

JAMES BRITTON, PETER ELLBOW, 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
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 Knoeshaw, 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