reach some agreement about a set of common guidelines or standards for direct assessment, we will be able to communicate in a language in which we share common definitions.

Mary Fowles then presented the ETS Guidelines for Developing and Scoring Free-Response Tests. She discussed the steps involved in planning direct writing assessments and in developing writing test specifications. Next, she explained the guidelines for writing the scoring specifications and techniques for developing writing test items and scoring criteria. She also described methods for pretesting the test items and field criteria, and cautioned conferences to ask questions about the test and the scoring criteria, such as "How well do the examinees understand what they have to do?" "Do the tasks elicit the responses that were expected and desired?" "Can the criteria and scale be used to score the test easily?" "Are the readers using the scoring system in the way that it was intended?" "To what extent do the readers agree on the scores that they assign to the responses?"

Fowles then described each of the steps in administering and scoring an essay test of writing. Next she explained the use of statistics to evaluate the test and the scoring system. She ended with a discussion of techniques for evaluating the validity of writing tests.

Bloom pointed out that nineteen states now require testing in order for a person to earn a high school diploma. In 1982, New Jersey implemented its High School Proficiency Test (HSPT), the writing component of which is four years old. In New Jersey, testing has become increasingly aggressive, and there has been much growth in basic skills competency. In the first year of the HSPT, the passing rate was 50%. It is now 90%, with 85% of students from urban areas passing. The ninth grade HSPT is a test which measures cumulative skills K-8. The results of the test are used for curriculum review and development, in addition to being used for student placement. The HSPT consists of two parts: essay and multiple-choice. In terms of a student's mastery of writing, the essay is more important than the multiple-choice part, but the multiple-choice part is necessary for validation. Where writing is concerned, theory, research and principles of instruction must be integrated with principles of assessment.

Charles Chew briefly described the writing assessment program in New York state. New York state has had a Regents exam since the 1870s and competency testing since 1979. Chew is not certain that writing can be accurately assessed by only one piece of writing. New York's writing test includes several different samples of writing. Extensive pre-testing of prompts is conducted in order to ensure that students can handle the topics, and students are required to write in different forms for different purposes and for a variety of audiences. In addition, the test requires students to do whole pieces and allows for revision.

In New York, students are tested state wide from grade 5 through grade 11. For the fifth grade test, students must write two different pieces on separate days. They can choose from five different kinds of topics. Pre-competency testing is administered in grade 8 or 9, depending on a school's administration. For this test, students must write a business letter, a report, and a persuasive piece (the scores of all three are added and averaged). The Regents competency test is administered in grade 11 to two different groups: (1) non-Regents students and (2) Regents students. The test can be taken regularly until the student reaches the age of 21.

The first group--below average students--must produce three separate pieces of writing, just as with the pre-competency group in grade 8 or 9. The second group--average and above-average students--is tested for listening skills, spelling, vocabulary, and in five other areas. These students must produce two pieces of writing, one on literature and the other on a non-literary topic. For evaluation of essays, New York state uses the modified holistic approach. Results of these tests indicate that the elements of good writing are the same across grades 5, 8, 9 and 11.

Chew stated that the assessment program has had enormous impact on instruction across the state. The state now trains teachers at all levels in holistic scoring on a regular basis. Moreover, teachers are trained to examine test results analytically with an eye toward improvement. New York has also designed a new language arts curriculum, and it is now planning an approach to address the newly revised English Language Arts syllabus. Continued on page 15
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**Writing Assessment K-12: Is There an Instructional Side?**

Speakers: Diane Bloom, New Jersey Department of Education
Charles Chew, New York State Education Department

Introducer/Recorder: Rose Ann Morgan, Middlesex County College, N.J.

Diane Bloom began by briefly mentioning the four areas that would be covered in her presentation: research and reform, testing as an institutional part of scholarship, writing theory and its impact on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Test, and support for an effective writing program K-12. Bloom noted that education has undergone many reform movements; at present we are in the third wave of the eighth reform. The first wave was characterized by the issuance of reports such as the Carnegie Report, A Nation at Risk. The second was characterized by the reaction, "The reports may be right, but what now?" And the third is characterized by what we are doing now--instructional research.

Bloom said that today, we know certain things to be true about testing: (1) it is the barometer of public accountability for our schools; (2) it is part of professional rigor; and (3) it influences instruction and instruction influences it. But we must not forget another important fact: we cannot hold students accountable for what they have not been taught, nor can we hold teachers responsible for what they have not been trained to do.

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addressed questions in specific disciplines, and the fourth addressed questions about specific assignments.

Katarina Edinger (English Department) handed out a summary sheet of the results, which she then discussed. Based on first and second year student responses in required general education courses, students gave a highly positive evaluation of the writing. The wording of one question provoked a response that contradicted other responses: most students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the assertion, "I enjoy writing more now than I did at the beginning of the semester." With the audience participating, a discussion of this item led to revised wording and also to a recognition that students exposed to writing learn that it is hard work and that few students admit enjoying work.

Marcia Schlofmitz (Computer Science Department) assessed the value of journal-writing in her Computer Science course, allowing students to reflect on their journals on the problems they are having with the subject matter. She assessed the student journals on their thoughtfulness, and she stressed the importance of allowing students to keep parts of their journals private and to choose which pages they show the instructor at the end of the semester. Acknowledging that she used journals as part of the learning process, Schlofmitz noted that she did not use a red pencil on her students' journals. She required a certain quantity of entries and that the entries be related to subjects discussed in class.

Gunvar Satra discussed the problems of assessing journal-writing, including the overwhelming amount of work for the instructor. She also graded the journals on quantity of pages, but added the regularity of entries throughout the semester. She set a maximum number of points that a student might earn through journal-writing. And she asked the students to grade themselves on their journals. She read their journals at the end of the semester and discovered only a few cases of total disparity between her assessment and the students' own assessment of their writing. Perry then noted that at the beginning, the project was organized by departments within each discipline because they assumed that the writing skills varied greatly across the disciplines. However, they discovered in the course of the eight-year project that writing in different disciplines had common standards of excellence. The areas of agreement were reflected in the descriptions of effective writing given by participants at the beginning of this workshop.

EVALUATING WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AND OTHER ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Speakers: Edward White, California State University, San Bernadino
Gale Hughes-Wiener, Minnesota Community College System
Harvey Wiener, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY

Introducer/Recorder: Marianne Reynolds, Mercer County Community College, N.J.

Edward White provided an overview of how students' writing is assessed, and he emphasized the notion that a writing test is inseparable from its purpose. He identified six types of tests according to function: admission, placement, equivalency, rising junior, exit barrier, and program assessment tests. He pointed out some of the differences in criteria applied to each type. For example, an admission test must have predictive validity, whereas a placement test need not be as rigorous since consequential decisions are not as drastic or final. White also emphasized that no single test score should be used as the only measure of a student's achievement or potential.

Next, Gale Hughes-Wiener described the Writing Across the Curriculum Program of the Minnesota Community College System. As a program evaluator, she has been involved in the program's implementation and teacher training and in the preliminary collection and analysis of data. She stressed the need to employ sound research methods in testing the assumption that increasing the quality and quantity of student writing leads to increased learning. Some of the assessment techniques she used to assess the program were Likert Scale surveys and hour-long interviews of faculty, holistic rating of student essays, matched class studies, student evaluation surveys, and workshop questionnaires. The project is scheduled to run for an additional year and a half, after which the evaluation will be completed.

Finally, Harvey Wiener described the current state of assessment. Although faculty interest in assessment is growing, the purposes and practices of assessment at most institutions are often questionable. Wiener noted the conflict between faculty and policy-makers that often accompanies assessment programs and decisions. He stressed the need for instructors to clarify the instructional purposes of assessment and plan accordingly. He emphasized the need to analyze assessment data sensibly and make appropriate program changes. He briefly described the National Project for College Assessment Program Evaluation (CAPE) as a resource for administrators and faculty members who are interested in evaluating and improving their testing programs. Wiener stressed, however, that members of institutions should engage in some self-study and analysis before consulting outside experts.

Chew concluded by noting that there is the danger among administrators, teachers and parents to use a test to encourage limited instruction and to use a test for classroom and school management. Some administrators believe that test results are the only indicator of student performance. However, writing done in a test situation may not truly reflect a person's ability as a writer.