Next, Connor reported on her attempt to find a method that would give more specific indications of writing progress than holistic assessment alone does. She noted that students may make progress during a term of instruction but they often receive the same holistic score that they received at an earlier testing. To be able to document students' progress in persuasive writing, Connor used several methods of analysis. She mentioned two in summary form--her examination of syntactic features using the computerized analysis of 39 syntactic variables, developed by D. Biber at the University of Southern California; and her study of coherence, using a scale that includes nine different variables related to topic development. Her emphasis, however, was on a third method, one that can be used to evaluate an ESL writer's control of informal reasoning.

Connor explained her use of Stephen Toulmin's Criteria for the appraisal of informal reasoning in written work. She has used this system of analysis to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in a student's writing that cannot be assessed by holistic scoring. This system makes it possible to explain the differences in writing skills of two students who receive the same score on a writing sample rated holistically. Connor and a colleague examined the responses of twenty-six students to the question asked on the Fall 1986 TOEFL Test of Written English (TWE). They were looking in particular for elements Toulmin described as claims, data, and warrants. In the rating scale used, each of these elements is given a score ranging from 1 (lowest) to 3 (highest). Claims are judged according to how specifically they are stated; by the number of relevant subclaims developed; and by how logically, feasibly, and originally the claims are developed in the essay. Data are rated on their quantity and quality. Warrants--judgments made by writers that are based on their claims and data--are rated according to their number, their reliability, and their relevance to the claim made. Connor stated that test-takers in general received higher scores for claim and data than for warrants, which require higher level thinking skills.

Connor noted that the methods of analysis that she and her colleague used allowed them to measure changes in writing ability that holistic scoring alone cannot measure. She distributed to those attending the session a copy of a student response to the TWE topic and a Toulmin analysis of that response.

The speakers concluded by noting that the assessment methods that they had presented could be used for ESL writers and for native speakers.

**IDENTIFYING THE WRITING STRATEGIES USED BY BLACK STUDENTS IN NAEP AND NJHSPT**

**Speaker:** Miriam Chaplin, NAEP Visiting Scholar, Educational Testing Service

**Introducer/Recorder:** Judith Argona, Ocean County College, N.J.

In this workshop, Miriam Chaplin described the construction and application of a rubric for analysis of writing strategies used by black students taking the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the New Jersey High School Proficiency Test (NJHSPT). The project was designed to provide Chaplin with sufficient data to design a writing curriculum geared specifically to black junior high school students.

Chaplin began by explaining that black students, despite a small surge in test scores during the early 1970's, have scored consistently lower than their white counterparts on the NAEP. Since black students generally demonstrate strong oral language skills, Chaplin concluded that they need a specifically designed writing curriculum that teaches them to translate these oral skills into productive strategies for academic writing. She posed three questions as she began her study: (1) Are there characteristics in black students' writing that impede successful communication? (2) Are there identifiable characteristics in black students' writing that reflect a particular learning style or cognitive approach to verbal problem solving? (3) Can weaknesses in black students' writing be transferred into strengths through the process of classroom instruction?

Three readers, in addition to Chaplin, participated in the first round of essay readings. All were black, held advanced degrees, had experience working with black students, and were conducting research projects of their own in writing. Sample essays were randomly chosen from sets of NAEP and NJHSPT papers (1983-84). Although the NAEP samples listed students' race, the readers were not permitted to see this information. Instead, they were asked to classify writers as "black" or "white" by observing stylistic features of the essays. Then they were asked to make written observations about what they perceived to be racially significant variations in student writing strategies. For the NJHSPT sample essays, all written by black students, the readers were asked only to record all probable racially significant variations in writing style.

Combining their written observations, the readers next developed a rubric designed to demonstrate the varying use of strategies by black and white writers. Broad categories, which included "Rhetorical Devices," "Organization," "Task Perception," and "Cultural Influence," were formulated and then subdivided into "Connectives," "Descriptive Language," "Ellipses," "Repetition," "Sentence Sense," "Tone Markers," "Conversational Tone," "Unity," "Focus," "Cultural Vocabulary," and "Black Vernacular English."

The rubric was then used to chart a rereading of the essays, and the resulting chart of responses demonstrated that, in general, black writers do not use successful writing strategies as frequently or as effectively as their white
counterparts. Of interest, however, is the fact that the gap between black and white students narrowed on the NJHSP, probably because this test, a prerequisite for high school graduation, motivated students to perform well and because the topic called for a narrative essay—an accessible format.

At this point in the study, Chaplin conducted a reliability study of the consistency of the reader responses, with resulting positive correlations of between 0.6 and 0.8. After the rubric had been tested in the preliminary reading, Chaplin used it in a solitary reading of several hundred additional essays by both black and white students. Using the rubric, she was able to identify race correctly in a substantial percentage of cases—ranging from 65% to 83%, depending on the test and writing mode.

According to Chaplin, there are several important implications of this study for curriculum development. To begin with, black writers need to learn logical reasoning skills (especially higher-level thinking patterns). They need to build upon their strong oral skills by learning to speak logically and then transferring this strategy to written work. Black students need to be taught to place the conversational mode in its proper context and not to confuse it with the appropriate strategies for formal written assignments. These goals can best be achieved in a structured classroom environment; however, there should not be so much structure that students are intimidated about participating and giving of themselves. Furthermore, an effective writing curriculum will minimize the "drill approach," since students generally have been exposed to a great deal of this type of instruction already, with little effect on writing proficiency.

Chaplin concluded by stating that although all writers need to be taught similar writing strategies, black writers may require specific emphasis and instructional techniques. This study will provide valuable information to help schools offer black students the writing instruction they need.

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TEACHING AND TESTING WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Speakers: Penny Dugan, Stockton State College, Pomona, N.J.
Jerome Paris, New Jersey Institute of Technology

Introducer/Recorder: Robert E. Lynch, New Jersey Institute of Technology

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Programs are developed and shaped to match the history and structure of the institutions in which they operate. Methods for evaluating the impact of WAC programs on students, faculty, and curriculum must, therefore, be devised with an eye toward the specific characteristics of the institutions involved.

Penny Dugan emphasized the recent origin and experimental nature of Stockton State College in her discussion of Stockton’s Writing Program, which she directs. Founded in 1971 as an “alternative” approach to public higher education, Stockton has no academic departments and places heavy emphasis on cross-disciplinary activities. Originally there was no required composition course at Stockton—in fact, no required course of any kind—and so from its very beginning Stockton has been committed to teaching and evaluating writing in a wide variety of content courses. Although College Writing has now become a requirement for all Stockton students, they are also required to choose two courses from a list of writing intensive courses and at least one course designated for Writing Across the Curriculum. Beyond this requirement, students are encouraged to take one course from either list each term.

Stockton has recently initiated a Junior Writing Test, which students must take after they complete 64 credits towards their degree. They are asked to choose one of four topics of current interest, all of an expository/persuasive nature, and are allowed two hours to write their essays. Faculty and staff members from programs across the college come together to review holistic assessment methods and to score the essays under Dugan’s direction. Each essay is read by two readers using a scale of 1 to 6, with the two scores being added. When the scores are not identical or contiguous, additional readers become involved. Essays receiving combined scores of 8 to 12 are deemed proficient, those with 2 to 6 not proficient. Essays with a combined score of 7 are read by a third reader to determine proficiency. This year, about two-thirds of the essays were judged proficient. Students whose essays were judged not proficient are given the option of another testing within a few weeks. Unless the second test reverses the result of the first, these students are required to complete a Writing Intensive Course in the following semester.

Dugan stressed that although the college administration advocated the Junior Writing Test, presumably to guarantee proficient student writing in upper-division courses, it has been inconsistent in its support of the Writing Program. The impetus behind the Writing Program and the reason for the success of the writing test, she concluded, continues to be the involvement of a large number of dedicated faculty from many disciplines.

Jerome Paris reviewed the progress of New Jersey Institute of Technology’s two-year old program in Writing Across the Curriculum. NIIT is a public technological university best known for its engineering, computer science, and architecture curricula. A survey of faculty in 1984 indicated recognition of the importance of effective writing in the curricula and broad support for a cross-disciplinary writing program. In 1984, Paris applied for and received support for a Writing Across the Curriculum project at NIIT through the state’s FICE program (Fund for the Improvement of Collegiate Education).

The program committee held a two-day, off-campus workshop in January, 1985, attended by thirty-five volunteer faculty representing every department of the university. In addition to allowing the participating faculty to share views on student writing and how best to improve it, the retreat atmosphere prompted frank discussions of other matters of common pedagogical concern, which tend to be overlooked, Continued on page 14