

## EVALUATING WRITING ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Speakers: Ken Kantor, *University of Georgia*  
Sally Hudson, *University of Georgia*

Introducer/Recorder: Carol Lynch-Brown, *The Florida State University*

Ken Kantor and Sally Hudson discussed several goals for writing assessment: (1) for instructional management (diagnosis); (2) for student screening and placement; (3) for program evaluation. Their presentation treated the third category for grades 7-12. They noted that both formative and summative data need to be collected in order to evaluate a program to assess writing.

They presented three case studies of school districts that conducted district-wide writing evaluation programs. The first case (1977-78) was a school district which invited writing experts to set up a "testing of writing" program. In this instance, the writing assessment program was established and then the district personnel worked with consultants to administer the program. The approach used was to gather a letter and an essay from all students. The papers were scored holistically in an analytic fashion (Diederich Scale), using the teachers as scorers after being trained through training sessions.

The second case (1980-81) included eighteen districts in Georgia and represented 10% of the Georgia tenth graders. The project was conducted as a pilot program in the establishment of a statewide assessment program. In this study, comparison of scoring measures was undertaken. The measures (holistic-

analytic, primary trait, holistic-general impression, mechanics count, and four objective tests including the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*) were correlated with one another and then evaluated.

The results revealed (1) high reliability for analytic and general impression scoring but not for primary trait scoring, (2) low correlations between papers by the same student, and (3) high correlations between the Iowa Test scores and the holistic scores.

Kantor and Hudson recommended that all writing be scored holistically, despite the extra expense involved in scoring writing samples. Holistic scoring is worth the expense because it provides higher face validity and because it increases the knowledge and understanding of writing that teachers gain from being involved in the scoring process.

The third case study presented an argument for starting with an inservice program for English teachers in a developmental writing approach, then building on this for the assessment project. In this manner, teachers are more informed and feel more secure about the assessments and thus support the project and were holistically scored.

Kantor and Hudson concluded that students need to write for a wide range of functions and audiences, and assessments should also reflect this range.