
SYSTEM-WIDE EXAMINATIONS: IMPROVING EVALUATION AND PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

*Peter Moskos and David Ireland, Carleton Board
of Education*

Ontario's Academic Credit English examination is a major component of the Carleton Board's systemwide program in student and program evaluation of senior English. The aims of the program include a commitment on the part of teachers and students to the evaluation process; a consistency in procedures and marking reached through consensus; an openness whereby students know what they must do to achieve; and an integration of student and program evaluation.

In a demonstration of conference marking, workshop participants used the essay marking guide developed for the examination to mark sample student essays. Reflection upon this activity led to a discussion of key features of the project: The first is teacher involvement in the development and management of the examination by committees. Next is the training of teachers in evaluation techniques. Another key feature is classroom use of exemplar booklets which contain objectives, marking guides, and marked samples of student writing showing how criteria have been applied. Teachers also learn about centrally

organized conference marking in which they remark and comment on each other's evaluations and review all aspects of the examination. Evaluation data and teacher reactions are used as a basis for modifying curriculum and for developing new evaluation instruments and strategies. We then discussed recent findings from analyses of the marking and of student writing and considered ways that teachers can respond to these findings.

The project has had a significant impact. It has profoundly affected the way teachers evaluate in English. It has bolstered the confidence of teachers, students, parents, and trustees in evaluation procedures and, for the first time, brought teachers together to examine their standards and to develop their skills in evaluation. In addition, the project has had a major impact on the way in which English is taught. There is wide agreement that the project has done as much to improve instruction as it has to improve evaluation.