The Writing Sample and the General Education Development Examination: a New York State Attempt

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THE WRITING SAMPLE AND THE GENERAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT EXAMINATION:

A NEW YORK STATE ATTEMPT

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the
Department of Education and Human Development
Faculty of Education
State University of New York College at Brockport
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Education

by
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State University of New York College at Brockport
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The Writing Sample and the GED

Abstract

This thesis will provide information and assistance to High School Equivalency (HSE) instructors who work with out-of-school youths and adults, preparing them to pass the New York State HSE exam. Specifically, this paper will: review the development of the General Education Development (GED) examination nationally; research the reasons why a writing sample will be required of New York State exam candidates as of July, 1986 (and should be required of exam candidates generally); illustrate the steps of the composing process; suggest ways that an instructor, perhaps unfamiliar with the teaching of writing, may help students learn the composing process and how to use it to generate the writing sample on the test; review the criteria of holistic assessment, both formative and summative; and, report relevant comments from others who have implemented similar, large-scale direct writing assessments. Finally, the paper will indicate what effects this innovation might have on NYS/HSE classroom teaching and on the writing competencies of participating students; suggest how this implementation may impact the HSE program statewide; and, in conclusion, indicate what further research may follow.
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The Writing Sample and the GED

CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem

In the 1940's when the GED examination was first constructed, it was used to credentialize primarily returning GI's, who had left off education for military service, and upon completing their military obligation, needed to produce documentation for employers or school admissions personnel, that they had a certain minimum level of achievement, and that they were on a comparable basis with their peers who had completed high school. The examination, plus a high school transcript, plus life experiences, all were factors considered before the HSE certificate was granted. Time passed. Now, in the 1980's, the HSE candidate population is demographically quite different (younger, less formal education, less life experience). At the same time, demands from employers and college enrollment personnel have become stringent. Technology of the eighties, the computer age, requires sustained and logical thought processes for even entry-level work, and a level of literacy not previously demanded.

The Writing Skills portion of the GED in its present standardized form, does not determine whether an individual is or is not literate in the sense that literacy means one can express well-developed
thoughts. The Writing Skills portion, as now constructed, measures primarily editing and proofreading skills. A writing sample (such as an essay), however, can only be written by a logical, sequential thinker.

The New York State Education Department (NYS/ED), directed by the Board of Regents, with no prompting from the GED Testing Service, in an attempt to keep pace with the standards of the Regents Competency Test (required for a regular high school diploma), has added a writing sample as an additional requirement to earn the NYS/HSE diploma, to take effect as of July, 1986.

The number of people taking the HSE examination nationally has increased steadily over the years. State education departments across the country have instituted HSE preparation classes to meet the needs of the people who need more than an independent review of previously learned material. In ever more frequent cases, the material has not been previously learned.

HSE instructors in New York State, and eventually in all states, will need to be equipped with curriculum guides in writing and with specific techniques for teaching the writing process to their diverse population. New York State HSE teachers may be the first to teach the writing process, but all other states will eventually require that writing as a process be taught also. HSE instructors also must have a familiarity with classroom assessment techniques and an awareness of holistic evaluation used by the raters who will grade the papers in Albany.
The purpose of this paper is to overview the history of the GED examination to the present and the rationale for its updating; to describe the composing process, focusing on its application to the essay required on the HSE test; and to suggest teaching techniques to writing instructors in HSE classes throughout New York State. Further, this paper will review holistic methods of assessment, as used in the classroom and by the Albany rater-readers. A final section of the paper will suggest possible further research.

Questions to be Answered

This study examined the following questions:

1. How did the High School Equivalency examination develop to its present form?

2. What factors led the New York State Board of Regents to mandate a writing sample requirement in addition to the GED examination as a requirement for an HSE diploma?

3. What are the stages of the composing process?

4. What procedures and plans are suggested to assist classroom instructors in preparing candidates to successfully complete this new writing sample?

5. Specifically, what will the criteria of assessment be for the evaluation of this new writing sample?

6. How will the assessing of the writing sample be conducted and what are the logistics of the evaluation procedure?
7. What are the findings of others who have implemented similar, large-scale direct assessments of writing?

8. What further research studies are indicated?

Need for the Study

A writing sample will soon be required in addition to a passing GED examination score in order to obtain a NYS/HSE diploma. This change in requirements has been mandated by the NYS Board of Regents. The state of New York is to be commended for planning to implement this writing sample requirement in July, 1986. However, if the attempt is to be successful, much groundwork needs to be laid.

Curriculum must be designed for all HSE instructors, most of whom have had little experience in writing and no prior training. Assessment techniques used in the classroom for peer and self-evaluation must also be disseminated to the instructors. Evaluation methods to be used by the state in its holistic assessment must also be clarified for classroom teachers. Inservice cost and time must be allocated to train staff in prescriptive and instructional techniques. Teachers, like people everywhere, will "buy into" a new idea if they have a degree of ownership, if they have helped to develop or adapt the concept (in this case, curriculum) and have helped to develop classroom assessments that they feel comfortable with.

This thesis will review in Chapter II the history of this now widely used instrument (GED), pointing out that due to demographic
changes in the testing population, and to societal changes, there is
an overdue need for a direct measure of writing skill to be part of
the test. Such a measure is not currently required in any state or
province that uses the test; New York stands alone in its 1986
requirement of a writing sample. The third chapter will review in
detail what writers in general consider to be the sine qua non of
good writing, the composing process. Chapter III also will provide
to the HSE instructor the means to include the composing process in
the classroom instruction, which will enable students to begin
writing. It will also specify how the composing process can be
focused to complete the writing sample requirement on the NYS/HSE
examination. A final chapter will suggest what effects this
implementation may have on classroom instruction, students' skills,
the program statewide, and, finally, what further research may be
indicated.
Definitions and Abbreviations of Terms

AUDIENCE: Person or group for whom the communication is intended.

COMPOSING PROCESS: Generating, organizing, and presenting of ideas in writing the steps are both sequential and recursive.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT: Measurement of skill mastery by means of subjective testing which requires that the skill be demonstrated and that certain criteria be met.

EDITING: Rereading of a written product for specific kinds of writing improvement.

ESSAY: Composition which presents a point of view on a particular subject.

EXPOSITORY ESSAY: Presents a viewpoint, explains, clarifies, and illustrates it.

FORMATIVE EVALUATION: Ongoing, diagnostic assessment by classroom teacher for purposes of adjusting instruction to individual (criteria-references).

HOLISTIC SCORING: Method of assessment in which the rater reviews the paper for an overall or "whole" impression. Specific factors such as grammar, syntax, tone, and vocabulary undoubtedly affect the rater's response, but none of the factors is isolated and scored separately. Raters use "model" papers, called range finders, as guides. The "rubric" is concerned mainly with the relevance of the answer to the essay question and with the content of the answer, rather than with general features of writing.
INDIRECT ASSESSMENT: Measurement of skill mastery by means of objective testing of isolated skills used in a larger process.

JOURNAL: Personal record of daily life, an account of things that happen to a person and his/her thoughts and feelings about those events. It differs from a diary; with a journal it is expected that at some time one will share thoughts. However, it is rarely revised.

PERSUASIVE ESSAY: Writing piece that persuades the reader that the espoused viewpoint is a valid one, supported through facts, examples, statistics, etc.

PREWRITING: Stage of writing process where ideas are generated; the goal is quantity, where ideas, associations can occur. Selection and organization follow later.

PRIMARY TRAIT SCORING: Use of a single criterion for evaluating a single assignment. (Ex. in a single persuasive essay, did the writer take a clear position and give two or more elaborated reasons?) This criteria alone is the basis for scoring, whatever the chosen scale. It is the most sophisticated assessment and potentially the most useful.

PURPOSE: Reason a writer is communicating with the "others."

RELIABILITY: Determination that the results of a certain test instrument will be the same when it is repeated over time.

REVISING: Stage wherein students develop the sense of writing as material for rewriting and not as an immediate, final product. Necessary to have comfortable atmosphere where students have the chance to learn from each other and to practice.
SCHEMA: An abstract conceptual frame of reference surrounding a concept, an ideational scaffolding. The term refers to generic knowledge based on common subject matter, attributes or associations.

SCHEMATA: The plural form of schema.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION: Judgment rendered at course completion to assess whether or not a skill level has been mastered. (norm-referenced).

VALIDITY: Determination that a test instrument actually measures what it purports to measure.

VOICE: Writer's status as writer of a certain piece (Ex., parent to teacher, constituent to representative, etc.).

WHOLE-PIECE: Production of a written communication using the steps of the composing process.

WRITING STAGE: Step in the composing process which involves synthesis and application of basic skills. Ideas, thoughts, and facts are organized into a form.

ACE: American Council on Education
ETS: Educational Testing Service
GED: General Education Development
HSE: High School Equivalency
HSE-W: High School Equivalency Test in Writing
PCT-W: Preliminary Competency Test in Writing
RCT-W: Regents Competency Test in Writing
Limitations of the Study

New York State is the only state which has decided to implement the writing sample as an additional requirement for earning the high school equivalency certificate (Patience). Consequently, there is no evidence of national interest in research connected with this state's implementation. Further, this implementation has not occurred yet, but is scheduled for July, 1986 (Ambach). Thus little has been written about an event that is anticipated but not yet recorded. To date, no significant information has been distributed to teachers by the NYS Department of Education regarding this change or how teachers are to meet the needs of students preparing to write the essay.

The information about the change in test requirements presented herein has been acquired through phone calls and correspondence primarily, and may prove, in retrospect, to have been unintentionally misquoted, or be only a partial explanation of an issue that is later judged to be more complex than originally understood.

The Educational Testing Service of the American Council on Education has not been consulted by the NYS Department of Education to date (Patience) regarding this change and thus, no direct information is available from a national testing service on this anticipated change. Therefore, a portion of this study is necessarily exploratory in nature.
Chapter II

Review of the Literature on the GED and Rationale for Updating

Often it is necessary to review the past development of an entity in order to more fully understand its present nature and anticipated changes; such is the case with the high school equivalency examination, or as it is now more popularly known, the GED exam.

The initial high school equivalency program began in 1942 with the development by the examination staff of the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI) of a battery of tests to be administered to personnel who had not completed high school studies. The USAFI consisted of civilian testing experts who worked with an advisory committee that was established with the support and cooperation of the American Council on Education (ACE), the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and regional accrediting associations (Malizio).

The test provided an opportunity for these persons to demonstrate they had achieved learning outcomes usually associated with a high school diploma. Because of this military testing program, many persons were able to qualify for jobs and pursue postsecondary education after being discharged from military service (GEDTS Brochure B120M).

After the war, the testing program expanded to include the civilian population. Since 1943, the General Education Development
Test Service (GEDTS) of the ACE has guided and directed the program nationally. Information provided by a prominent adult education publisher summarizes the pervasive influence of the GED as a credentializing force. Performance on the GED test is accepted by the departments of education in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, six U.S. territories, and nine Canadian provinces as the criterion for issuance of a high school equivalency diploma or certificate (Cambridge Brochure #1).

All forms of the test (which is regularly normed on a US high school population) are constructed by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, under a contract with the GEDTS of the ACE. Although all fifty states accept performance on this nationally normed test to issue a high school equivalency certificate or diploma, it is not necessarily the same performance that is required by every state. It is up to each state to set its own age and residency requirements as well as the minimum acceptable scores that candidates must achieve to earn that state's certificate or diploma. Individual state's requirements evolve as the demographics of the testing population and the needs of society change.

An example of the test's use over a period of time in one particular state, Massachusetts, illustrates how an individual state makes use of, but is not limited to, the GED test. Massachusetts had offered a high school equivalency certificate since 1946. Until 1967 the certificate was awarded on the bases of the following combination: GED test scores, prior education, work experience, and
armed service credits. Requirements were then revised, and since 1967, Massachusetts has awarded the GED certificate based on a single criterion - satisfactory GED scores (Ulin).

Other states have had a similar evolution in certificate requirements over a period of decades. Indications now are that requirements in many states will soon be more stringent, with New York State leading the way with its increased minimum subtest score and writing sample requirement.

Current statistics indicate the considerable breadth of the GED testing program. In 1983, about 776,000 persons took the tests; nearly 73% of those candidates, or 566,000 persons, qualified for a credential in accordance with the criteria established by their states or provinces (GEDTS 5/84). New York State statistics released by its education department reveal that in 1983 about 97,000 persons took the tests; nearly 52% of those candidates, or 50,000 persons, qualified for a credential in accordance with the criteria established by New York State (NYS/ED PR).

Both national and state statistics reflect the fact that equivalency certificate holders represent a significant segment of the high school graduated population. In fact Malizio's study indicates that in 1979 approximately 12% of all high school credentials awarded in the U.S. were based on GED test results.

It is to the benefit of future certificate holders and to society-at-large that the GED examination continues to be what it
purports to be, a test "designed to measure as accurately as possible the application of the knowledge and skills generally associated with four years of high school instruction." (Malizio, p.2).

In December of 1984, the New York State Board of Regents decided not to wait for the GEDTS to offer its version of a direct assessment of writing (anticipated to be implemented in 1988), but chose instead to have the NYS/ED implement a writing sample by July 1,1986. The consensus of the Board of Regents was that, if the NYS/HSE diploma were to maintain its status as an equivalent document by government, education, and marketplace standards, it could not wait any longer to implement already overdue changes. The NYS/K-12 writing program had, since 1979, been revamped to meet societal needs; it was mandatory that the requirements to earn an "equivalent" diploma be revised also.

The final section of this chapter will review conditions which led to the K-12 competency program, which was in turn instrumental in the 1986 implementation of the equivalency test's writing sample requirement.

Although not presented to the American public until 1983, a publication prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, entitled A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, detailed the conditions of the 1970's which led to state reforms in education, such as the NYS/K-12 writing program. A Nation at Risk contains the following devastating indictment of our country's secondary school system:
We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and to the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity.... if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves.... We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral, educational disarmament. Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them (p. 5).

Despite the unhelpful military vocabulary used throughout the report, the document does contain a sensible and restrained recommendation in the area of English content. It states that the secondary English curriculum should equip graduates to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and use what they read; enable them to write well-organized, effective papers (emphasis added); develop their power to listen effectively, discuss ideas intelligently, and know our literary heritage and how it enhances our imagination and ethical understanding. The report, in summary, exhorts schools to have genuinely high standards rather than minimum ones, and for students to be encouraged to work to the limits of their capabilities.
Before this report was published, earlier broad criticisms of secondary education had been issued by both business and industry. In a 1981 paper presented at the International Conference on Language Problems and Public Policies, a New York State Education Department official summarized the criticisms:

Business organizations which have high school graduates complain bitterly about the inabilities of recent graduates. They complain that these students cannot read, have difficulty expressing anything in written form (emphasis added), and lack computational skills considered elementary. As a result many business companies establish their own educational programs to help overcome such deficiencies. The college admissions officers declare that the recent high school graduate is not what he or she once was. Statistics are cited which show a decline in SAT scores and the overall inability of many students to function at the expected college level. To combat this problem, colleges have established remedial courses for these incoming students (Chew, p. 30).

It is a fact that many large companies have established grants or some type of support for externally-operated educational programs to
serve residents where the businesses have branches (e.g., Grumman Corporation, J. C. Penney Company, New York Life Insurance, Standard Oil of Ohio, Ameritrust). Other companies have established in-house basic skills programs for their employees (e.g., Aetna Life Insurance Company, General Motors, New York Telephone, and Rockwell International) (BCEL Newsletter p. 10).

Reacting at that time to the criticisms of secondary education, especially those aimed at the area of writing instruction, John Andola, a New York State educator, has written: The public has spoken, political leaders have reacted, legislatures have decreed. Now it is the duty and responsibility of curriculum planners to respond by providing improved, or effective writing instruction.... Ways must be devised to highlight the instruction of writing and to teach writing more effectively than it has been taught in the past (p. 147).

Clearly the time was ripe for educators who understood the importance and value of writing instruction in the curriculum to lessen the imbalance in the system. The rising dissatisfaction from many sectors regarding the demonstrated level of achievement of high school graduates had not gone unnoticed by the Board of Regents of New York State. In the mid-seventies, the New York State Education Department, under the Board of Regents, had developed a competency testing program for the secondary school system. The
program, in effect since 1979, screen tests in three areas: reading, writing, and mathematics (RCT bulletin, 9/80). In this program there are two checkpoints where writing is assessed at the secondary level, the Preliminary Competency Test in Writing (PCT-W) in grade 8 or 9, and the Regents Competency Test (RCT-W) in grade 10 or 11. The PCT-W is designed to identify students in need of remediation and to determine the level of remediation required; the final RCT-W determines whether students meet the competency standards set for a high school diploma.

The RCT-W is untimed and contains three separate tasks: a business letter, a report, and a composition (RCT-W test 6-20-83). The RCT-W must be taken in January of grade 11. The test (a new one each time) is offered three times a year - in January, June, or August. A student may take the test as many times as necessary until he or she reaches the age of 22 years. Students may fulfill the writing competency requirement in ways other than through the RCT-W (other more rigorous standardized testing) (Chew, p. 5).

In assessing the value of the RCT-W test, now in operation six years, a New York State education department associate has written the following observation:

We in the NYSED believe we have good tests in our Regency Competency test in Writing ... We believe that ... the tests in their entirety, reflect, insofar as it is possible in a testing situation, what we now
know about the composing process. They require whole pieces of writing, suggest purpose and audience, and provide time for revision and editing (Schlawin, p.2).

The writing portion of the Competency Testing Program represents the state's attempt to upgrade writing competency for the secondary school system.

It follows logically that the NY State High School Equivalency testing program, whose stated purpose is to offer an equivalent certificate to the adult learner, would therefore take steps to have its testing reflect the changes in the regular high school diploma requirements. Accordingly, the following announcement was distributed to all HSE program managers throughout New York State.

On December 21, 1984, Commissioner Ambach announced plans to increase the requirements for obtaining the New York State High School Equivalency diploma. These new requirements are intended to make New York State's requirements more nearly consistent with the requirements for a local high school diploma.

Beginning in September, 1985 (later amended to July, 1986), diploma candidates will have to demonstrate their ability to write by passing a sixth test - a writing sample - which will be added to the traditional five tests of GED published by the ACE. This test will require candidates to generate a writing sample similar
to what is required in Part II by the Regents Competency Test in Writing, and probably will be scored similarly (Kratz, memorandum).

HSE teachers, who come from a variety of backgrounds, may register either a positive or negative initial reaction to the implementation of the writing sample, depending on their experience in and understanding of the composing process. Those who applaud the writing sample inclusion recognize it as a long overdue means of guaranteeing that writing instruction will be part of the HSE classroom curriculum. Even if it is only one state leading the way, and with questionable pre-planning at best, the writing sample inclusion is recognized as a positive step. Its inclusion as a test item will demand that higher level thinking skills be developed in the HSE classroom, skills that the marketplace and society-at-large now demand from its productive and independent citizens.

Instruction and practice in whole-piece writing will help to develop students' higher level thinking skills: analyzing, categorizing, specifying, comparing/contrasting, drawing inferences, relating cause and effect, creating analogies, forming hypotheses, and making judgments. Further benefits are that teaching the composing process promotes higher levels of interaction in the classroom, promotes self-esteem and self satisfaction, and in a reciprocal fashion, even improves reading comprehension (NYS/ED English /LA curriculum Draft). All the effects of including whole-piece discourse are positive.
Of equal importance to the beneficial effect to the individual is the positive effect that improved writing competencies will have on our highly structured, contemporary society. Industry, higher education, government institutions, and the whole of society benefits when its individual members, to any degree, improve their level of self expression. As citizens and workers, adults who are skilled in writing can deal more effectively with divergent viewpoints, can recognize and solve problems, and can cope with propaganda both in their lives and on the job (Elbow).

The next chapter, Chapter III, introduces the stages of the composing process and will be of assistance to all HSE instructors who anticipate implementing writing process in the classroom, from the enthusiastic to the tentative. It provides specific information on how the composing process is used in the classroom for a variety of writing modes, and concludes with how the HSE candidate can use the composing process in generating the writing sample on the NYS/HSE/GED test.
Chapter III

Review of the Literature on the Composing Process and Application to Persuasive Essay

Pre-Instructional Understandings

It is important that HSE instructors, soon to be faced with the task of preparing candidates to generate an expository essay, have an understanding of the term "composing process." The composing process is not involved when a student completes the final part of a given statement, or answers a question with a brief one or two sentence response. The composing process is involved when a writer is using a specific, recognized form of writing for a certain purpose, focused at a definite audience (Applied Writing, 1982). This is also known as "whole-piece" writing. The forms are varied and include essays, letters, news articles, reports, journal entries, stories, poems, and other lesser known forms.

To be effective as a writing teacher, it is mandatory that an HSE instructor personally and regularly produce a variety of forms of writing, that is, "whole-piece" writing. The importance of this function to successful teaching is succinctly stated by Blake:
If you want to teach writing, then you need to do a lot of writing yourself, different kinds of writing in different modes for different audiences. You need to analyze what you do as you compose; then you need to arrange what you do in the classroom to reflect this internalized knowledge about how people compose with words. If you don't follow some sort of process like this, you will be needlessly frustrated as you set out to discover how to teach others how to write well (Blake, p. 46).

Additional support for the concept of teacher participation in the composing process is offered by another teacher/writer:

Teachers who do write understand the writing process and help students master it. They construct thinking and planning activities before requiring drafting. They let students see them (emphasis added) write, pause, rewrite, fumble... and start again.... Teachers who write sometimes experience the uncanny discovery of ideas they didn't know they had - an exhilarating experience. Writers think and thinkers write, and teachers who write know this (Quick, p. 152).

Once it is clear to a teacher what whole-piece writing is, and that writing teachers themselves should engage in it frequently, the next step is to review the stages of the composing process.

Much effort is expended on the first stage, often referred to as pre-writing. This is the time when a person decides what to write about, what to include and exclude, and how to put the thoughts in
some order. An effective writing teacher has a variety of techniques to assist students in this first, gathering stage. Some pre-writing activities include brainstorming, discussion in groups, role playing and recording, interviewing, listening, outlining, note-taking, reading, observing, and finally, conferring with the teacher. The teacher organizes and directs these activities in an attempt to "raise the schema" of the student on several topics, one of which the student will eventually choose to write on (Cooper, Odell, Hawleys).

The second stage in the composing process is often called the writing stage. Although paper and pencil may have been used in a pre-writing exercise, the activity performed was a preliminary step to the actual writing stage, wherein the writer tries to "get it together." He decides his purpose and audience and how his thoughts will be sequenced. Then he writes. This step is difficult for even an experienced writer, but eventually some order does emerge (Elbow).

The next stage is the revising stage, in which the writer may do the following: delete unrelated information, add more detail or supporting evidence, rearrange ideas for better emphasis, and change words (Hawleys).

The final stage is editing, in which grammatical, orthographic, and semantic errors are hopefully corrected (Blake, Hawleys, Shaughnessy). After a final rewrite the copy is then ready for "other eyes" (Elbow).
Classroom applications of the composing process are many. This chapter will offer a selection of classroom strategies to help students become better writers, using a variety of forms. An inexperienced or highly structured teacher may question why a variety of forms are being presented when the HSE exam candidate's goal in writing is to write in only one form, the essay. The response to that observation is that to teach one form of written expression exclusively is not to teach writing. Writing is an expression of individual thought; since one does not always think in a singular manner, neither should all his writing be in one mode. Attempting other genres will improve one's ability to write the essay form (Cooper, Reid). Journal writing, letter writing, fable writing, simple poetic-form writing, and response-to-literature writing can be outlets for human expression, outlets that bring self-awareness, self esteem, and foster creative thinking. If a teacher first introduces a variety of forms, when the essay genre is introduced in the classroom it will be viewed as yet another form of expression, with its own framework and parameters to be sure, but the emphasis will be on students' thoughts and clarity of expression; the form will be of secondary importance (Cooper).

Before focusing on a specific form, it is important that the teacher be aware of several understandings. The classroom should be established as a haven, a supportive, constructive, sharing place
where people are encouraged to grow. Two ways to foster the sharing spirit are for the teacher to participate in writing every time the class does and to consistently exercise minimal dominance (i.e., be recognized not as an authority figure, but as a resource person) (Elbow, Shaughnessy).

The attitude or mind set of an effective writing teacher holds the following tenets:

- Mistakes should be treated as a chance to improve, not as an occasion for punishment. Mistakes should be dealt with by the teacher and the students as they occur in each other's writing.

- Students should get a great deal of response to their writing from the teacher and from other students, response at the discourse level as well as at the sentence level.

- Students should read large amounts of published writing of the same kinds they are writing.

- Students should write often (Cooper - notes, Holbrook).

Once convinced of these tenets, the teacher is equipped to introduce the composing process in the HSE classroom, applying it to a variety of forms of whole-piece writing. A teacher unfamiliar with writing may ask why bother to divide writing into stages during instruction. Hawley's response to the query is that this is what takes place in the human mind. There are three separate, sequential thinking functions: gathering, organizing, and presenting. If a writer tries to do all three at the same time, he is unable to do any of them.
The gathering function is what takes place during the pre-writing stage. Information on a broad topic is generated in a variety of ways during this stage. The one single most important technique for such gathering is called "brainstorming," which, well-executed, can tap an often unused stream of creativity for both groups and individuals (Hawley).

Hawley suggests that a poster with his rules of brainstorming be prominently displayed in the classroom for everyone to see. The six rules are brief:

1. No negative evaluation during the brainstorming period. Every idea is accepted at face value.
2. Work for quantity.
3. Any far-out ideas are encouraged.
4. Springboard or piggy-back from idea to idea.
5. Record each idea.
6. Set up and keep a strict time limit.

Hawley suggests that one way to introduce the brainstorming process is to display the poster, talk about it, give the class a topic of broad interest and possibly a humorous one, such as "Ways to Improve the Bathtub." Then give clear, verbal directions and set a time limit of a few minutes to record any and all ideas on the board.

The teacher then allows five minutes for everyone in the room to write an individual paragraph using the ideas that were generated by the class during the brainstorming session. Brainstorming was the
pre-writing activity; now time is being allowed for the writing stage itself. After five minutes, the class should probably be divided into small groups to share papers. Shaughnessy suggests that, as a participating writer, the teacher might choose to model by going first and sharing with the large group. This particular, brief activity covers pre-writing, writing, and then a large or small group sharing. It is important to note that not every writing activity or task is brought to completion through all stages of the composing process (NYS/ED English/LA Draft).

The benefits of brainstorming are that it opens the door to creativity and discovery, and it helps the writer find new and unusual relationships. The sharing of ideas on the board fosters the important non-competitive classroom atmosphere. Brainstorming is also a good way to warm up. It helps writers to think of topics and details to write about. "It doesn't by itself produce powerful writing, but it leads to powerful writing" (Elbow, p. 14).

Other suggested pre-writing techniques include asking open-ended questions to begin discussion on a topic likely to have broad interest (e.g., new seatbelt law, effects of fad diets), with class copies of a news article or a brief essay to help students review the issues. The teacher first tries to elicit opinions verbally, then allows class time to have everyone list reasons for his or her personal stand on an issue, give examples, and explore feelings on paper. No attempt is made for this to be done in any organized
fashion. The teacher must be aware that in the pre-writing stage, the goal is in the process, not the product (Elbow, p.14). Again, although paper and pencil are involved in this activity, it is labeled pre-writing; it is a necessary preliminary step.

Other pre-writing activities include role-playing and recording, writing dialogue, and listing contrasts (NYS/ED English/LA Curriculum Draft). As a teacher gains confidence, creativity blossoms and new pre-writing techniques suggest themselves.

After ideas have been generated in the pre-writing stages by brainstorming, or by any combination of gathering devices, the next step is the organizing or writing stage. In the writing stage, the form, purpose, and audience are determined. The class, for example, may have completed a pre-writing technique designed to raise students' schemata on the topic of communicating with a friend or relative via a friendly letter. (Tell about yourself. Ask questions that indicate that you are interested in the person you are writing to.) Thus, the form may be understood by the class as a given.

But the purpose for writing may not be clear to the student. The teacher's task is to help the student clarify what the purpose is through questioning, talking, and conferring with the writer, before and sometimes while the writing is in progress. The student's work, however, must clearly be his own. Shaughnessy advises that the teacher must be careful not to substitute personal stylistic preferences for those of the student.
"Audience" in a classroom situation is also orchestrated and pre-arranged in many instances by the teacher. For example, through careful logistical planning, the teacher can create an environment where there is a peer group audience for classroom, not a teacher audience. Shaughnessy admonishes the "authority figure" teacher that the usual asymmetrical teacher/student arrangement does not breed discussion but rather closure. The astute writing teacher promotes small-group discussion, acting solely as facilitator, recognizing that in discussion, the student-writers will come to know their audience, in this case their own peers.

Once the pre-writing generation of ideas has provided a topic, and the form, audience, and purpose are clear, the teacher and students, each independently, can write their own thoughts. This is a solitary time, when each writer transfers the information from his head onto a piece of paper. The teacher should participate by doing his or her own individual writing in this step, but also should be available to provide spelling or usage rules to students if requested. At this stage, it is important for everyone to write freely and uncritically as possible, to generate as many words and ideas as possible before they get away (Elbow, Shaughnessy).

The writing stage in the composing process is somewhat akin to wrestling with a greased pig. The wrestling analogy come to life in an excerpt from Errors and Expectation: Writing is getting the thought down - proceeding into the thick of an idea, holding onto it,
even as the act of articulation refines and changes it (Shaughnessy, p. 82).

In the pre-writing stage then, the writer is introduced to a topic or creates his own, and explores the range of the topic. Related ideas, contrasts, metaphors, details, and concrete examples are generated through pre-writing activities already stated. As the writing stage is reached, the writer selects or has selected the form of writing, decides his purpose, and orders his thoughts for his audience (Odell). Shaughnessy's suggestion during the writing stage is that again, small groups be formed, where members function as audience for one another. For each group, the teacher acts only as a resource person, never as audience; this shift in emphasis changes the dynamics of the classroom behavior in remarkably productive ways. Gradually, Shaughnessy explains, teacher-pleasing responses disappear, and peer evaluation and self-evaluation become the norm.

The benefits to the student of this social or sharing aspect in the writing stage of the composing process are enumerated by Elbow:

1. Reading your words out loud strengthens your ability to take responsibility for your words.
2. It is an easy way to learn about writing. Matters of tone and voice are best learned through hearing what you like and imitating it.
3. There is a sense of feasibility; the believability of someone else's passage brings a realization that you could write that way too.
4. It is perfect practice for getting and giving feedback (Elbow, pp.22-24).

It cannot be emphasized enough that an accepting and supportive environment must exist if the composing process is to be successful in the classroom (Cooper, Odell).

A theme woven throughout Elbow's *Writing With Power* is an appropriate though to communicate to students at the writing stage - it is his assumption that virtually everyone has available great skill with words. He writes that "everyone can, under certain conditions, speak with clarity and power. These conditions usually involve a topic of personal importance and an urgent occasion (Elbow, p.7). The challenge the student-writer faces is that of learning to "speak" as clearly in written (emphasis added) language as one is capable of in spoken language.

The next stage to be considered is that of rewriting, or revision. Bader suggests an approach to revision, one which is appropriate after the writing of the first draft. It is a technique which naturally creates a sharing atmosphere and a peer audience environment; it is a combination of modeling and group sharing. In modeling, the teacher also completes a paragraph and free writes on a chosen topic for several minutes, such as the "bathtub topic" or a similar topic. This is not a time to revise or fine tune, but a time to "get it down." The idea, once again, in free writing, "is simply to get the student moving the pencil across the paper until an
important image, idea, or even a pattern of ideas emerges (Blake)."

In Bader's approach, the teacher's own freewriting provides the material for the following sequence. A series of volunteers in the class is asked to offer to do one of the following:

1. One student reads the teacher's writing sample.
2. Another student summarizes the piece.
3. A third student identifies parts that need clarification.
4. A final student states which part was best, what part is worth hearing more about.

One or two turns of having the teacher's work be the model is usually enough to get started. After a few classes with this approach, the teacher's work recedes from the process and individual anonymous student work is placed on an overhead projector (with student permission). The four steps are then repeated by the class.

A further refinement of the technique is to divide the class into groups of four and have each group do a round-robin of the four steps on each member's work. This technique is called peer-group critiquing (Bader).

After exhibiting his work to his peers and having the benefit of hearing constructive remarks, the student may feel the need for some improvement of his first effort. The greater the potential of the writer, the more urgent does he feel the need to make changes. This
third stage is often called the revising stage, the stage in which the writer shifts his focus. He ceases to be an uncritical idea generator and instead assumes a critical stance; he attempts to assess his own written thoughts. Can he state his ideas with more clarity? Will his writing then better convey his thoughts to his audience?

The teacher can assist the writer in the revising process. Again, acting as a resource person, not as audience, an instructor might write marginal comments, such as the following:

1. Can you give me some more examples of what you mean?
2. What are you trying to prove here?
3. Can you compare this experience with any other experience?
4. I can see you really admire this person; can you give me more details?
5. Your paper can be stronger if you describe this experience.

(Greene, p. 29).

Comments such as these help the writer to develop thoughts (2 and 3) and add detail (1, 4, and 5), steps in the revising process. In the revising stage, the focus is on the thoughts which have been generated; is there a logical sequence, are transitions missing, are conclusions left out?
There is often a difficulty in communicating to a class or to an individual the distinction between the revising stage and the next stage, editing. Shaughnessy notes that to a basic level student, the revision stage appears to be a waste of time. One method of encouraging revision, which resembles peer-group critiquing, is a technique called the helping circle. An individual reads his paper to a small group. Each person in the group is allowed to react in one of three ways: he can respond positively; he can ask a question which will clarify an aspect; or he can write a statement or recommendation which will improve it.

For those who have difficulty with the revision process (and few escape), this technique has several benefits:

1. The student is able to view writing as recursive in nature.
2. He has a sense of audience, both supportive and constructive.
3. He continually, in a workshop, collaborative fashion, works at trying to make meaning of his text.
4. He is given the opportunity to advance in his evolution toward a self motivation to revise, rather than merely in response to teacher comments (Greene).

Teacher and students gradually come to the knowledge that, when put into practice, the composing process is seldom linear or sequential, but is recursive. It is only for purposes of understanding the
process that this paper has thus far presented it as sequential. The more a writer writes, the greater seems the deviation from the linear pattern (Elbow).

A final stage in the composing process is that of editing, or proofreading. It is precisely at this point that there is a degree of dissension in the writer/educators' ranks. One position is that an error-free product is not a primary goal of teaching composition, but fluency is (Gebhardt, Elbow). Therefore, the teacher should be most concerned with the higher level skill, that of composing thoughts and feelings into the symbols of language or, in other words, should focus on process rather than product. This is not to say that grammar and usage conventions are not acknowledged, but that correction is selective and always in relation to an error in a student's specific task.

The place of grammar instruction in the writing class is further downplayed in this excerpt from a recent New York State English Council publication:

"Grammar exercises do not contribute to the development of writing skills, whatever they might do for the convenience of the teacher in red-pencilling the composition" (Schlawin, Chew, p. 91). The article further emphasizes the point that group teaching of grammar rules, as determined by several studies, is non-productive.

A different approach to grammar and usage errors is offered by Shaughnessy, who maintains that, for the beginning writer (many HSE
students are developmentally beginning writers, not remedial), there will be a measurable rate of error reduction if grammar and usage rules (missed by a significant number in the class) are acknowledged to the group as errors and then corresponding rules are group taught. Shaughnessy further maintains that there will result a manifest behavioral change due to "increased confidence in one's ability to make deliberate choices of word forms based on grammatical reasoning" (Shaughnessy, p. 258). Shaughnessy contends that errors do matter greatly and the phenomenon of error should be highlighted because errors shift the reader's attention from where he is going (meaning) to how he is getting there (code).

In support of her stand that it is preferable to provide group grammar instruction of conventional usage rules, Shaughnessy further contends that grammar still symbolizes for some students one last chance to understand what is going on with written language, so that they can control it rather than be controlled by it. She does acknowledge, however, the dilemma that may ensue - correcting errors often raises grammatically complex problems students are not prepared to consider analytically without additional understanding of English grammar. She concludes that one must accept, in student writing (after one's best efforts to help students reduce usage mistakes), a "tolerable territory of error."

Yet another approach is set forth by the Hawleys, who between them, have taught English composition for twenty-six years, from the upper elementary level through college.
"It is a cruelly paradoxical business to ask a student to stretch himself, to try something more difficult than anything he has ever done before, and then mark him down for faltering rather than praising him for making the attempt" (Hawleys, p. 86).

The Hawleys recommend the use of the small-group approach in the editing stage as the best technique for dealing with mechanical errors. Students in a small, trusting group can be valuable resources for each other, helping each other as much as they can, then referring more difficult problems to the teacher. This strategy enhances the learning opportunities of the weaker students and helps the more advanced to codify their knowledge. Hawleys maintain that the best way to learn anything is to teach it. Also, this strategy completely removes the teacher from the role of audience and judge. The teacher is understood as the "last resort," to be summoned if the problem cannot be resolved in the group.

An additional benefit, according to the Hawleys, is that instruction in mechanics is on an individualized basis, whether from another student or from a teacher. This approach is effective because the object of study is one in which the student is intensely interested, the immediate conveyance of his own written thoughts to his peer group.

Hawleys suggest that it is best to set aside a specific period of time for answering questions on mechanics and style just before the end of a writing project. This is recognized as the "teachable
moment," the point at which mechanics should be focused upon - at the request of the writer.

To summarize the three opinions - Gebhardt emphasizes downplaying mechanical errors in a group situation and being selective in individual correction (primary-trait analysis); Shaughnessy encourages acknowledging errors within a group situation and group teaching usage rules; Hawleys contend that it is best to let the quest for correct usage rules (an individual's desire to clearly convey his message) lead the individual student to ask for clarification, either from his peers in small grouping, or from the teacher.

Some synthesis of the three approaches is most likely what the writing teacher will develop in an individual classroom, depending on several factors: individual teaching style, the needs of the student population, and amount of time allotted to work with a specific group.

**Instructional Strategies**

The previous section reviewed the stages of the composing process: the pre-writing or gathering activities; the writing or organizing step; and the revising/editing step, or the presenting stage.

This section will suggest several different forms of literary expression that may be taught in an adult classroom. Teachers, depending on scheduling, enrollment, and range of ability levels
within the adult classroom, may find all or some of this material adaptable to their individual classrooms.

The HSE writing teacher, dealing with adults of diverse academic backgrounds and varied life experiences (from recent Regents senior dropout to mature, dislocated, under-educated production worker), should not assume that any common literary form is recognizable by all students, not even the paragraph.

A basic, developmental approach to paragraph writing, developed by combining several educators' suggestions, follows. After brainstorming or some other pre-writing activity on topics of broad interest, students and the teacher (always engaging in the activity along with the class) should select a main topic and then the class should be allowed writing time. The focus is not on structure, but rather on content and the teacher models by writing and sharing. By carefully planning, the teacher can enable the students to learn several methods of paragraph development in this way (perhaps one per session), and then after the fact, help students analyze the many paragraph types they have developed. Following is a list of possible topics to do a pre-writing activity on, and the corresponding type of paragraph which, with teacher direction, will develop.

Ways I Would Improve the Bathtub
or
How I Became a Wiser Shopper

Process Paragraph - in which the way to do something is taken apart and examined, a "how-to" paragraph
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How My (Pet) is Unique
or
My Fantasy Dream House

Extended Definition Paragraph -
in which the subject is
identified within a general
class and then is distinguished
from other members of that class

How a Child is Like a Kaleidoscope
or
Like Father, Like Son
or
Like Mother, Like Daughter?

Comparison/Contrast Paragraph -
in a comparison paragraph,
things usually considered
different are shown to be alike
in some ways; in a contrast
paragraph things usually
considered alike are different
in some ways

My Colors and Why
or
The Best Time of the Year

Classification Paragraph - in
which persons, places and things
are divided into groups,
according to a common basis
Why I (Swim, Ski, Run, Smoke, Drink) or Why I Don't (Swim, Ski, etc.)

A cause and effect paragraph is developed by inductive reasoning (Reid, Hawleys)

Students need not be limited to topics listed, but may select new topics, and develop the same paragraph type. Creativity is always to be encouraged.

Elbow suggests that all student (and teacher) writing should be kept in individual writing folders, separate from the prescription/record-keeping files. This separation will serve to give the writing its own identity and status; it is a creative product, different from drill sheets and workbook pages, and deserves its own space. From a practical viewpoint, it may be easier to locate and evaluate if filed separately also.

Having produced several paragraphs, of different types, the class and teacher may be ready to try new forms, possibly even a brief encounter with the poetic form. One fanciful, yet easily constructed poetic form is haiku. The instructor selects a topic for
brainstorming, and allows three or four minutes. It is helpful to choose a comparison-contrast topic, which will allow adult students to speculate on new possible relationships between common things (Hawleys). Possible topics for adults include: Why I'm Not Like a Machine at Work; Home Life Can Be a Circus; and, Is Nature the Best Tranquilizer?

During the brainstorming period, the teacher writes down whatever words or phrases the group offers (following Hawleys' brainstorming rules). The group is then instructed on the haiku framework (line 1 - 5 syllables, line 2 - 7 syllables, line 3 - 5 syllables), and is given time to choose from the words or phrases offered by the class or to choose new words to fit the pattern. Modeling of the process by the teacher will ensure that everyone understands the process. Discussion will also be required to ensure that everyone has enough information to choose an appropriate title. In a single session, one or several haiku poems may be written. Hawleys point out that this form, though brief, uses the three stages of the composing process: gathering information (brainstorming); organizing information (counting syllables which will fit a specific pattern); and finally, displaying or presenting (the organized and probably revised information in poetic form). Haiku is ideal as a display of student work in the classroom and sometimes beyond. A gradual increase in group trust, through modeling and non-judgmental sharing, will develop confidence in the group, a confidence which will lead them to allow their work to be seen by "other eyes" (Elbow).
Another form, one which helps students develop awareness of audience and voice is that of letter-writing. The teacher introduces an imaginary situation, one in which a strong feeling is involved (e.g., Someone I know owes me $50; he seems to have forgotten and I need to get my money back.) The class brainstorms for several minutes and then writes letters. In small-group situations, the students can follow a constructive critiquing procedure, letting each other know if each member of the group had a clear voice (knew his status as writer) in his letter and conveyed his message to his audience. Another topic would require a different voice and audience (e.g., I hit a neighbor's mailbox while he was away; I like him and I want to let him know I'll fix it.) A variety of such letters, shared in small groups, can help students gain confidence in their ability to express thoughts in writing and to have an awareness of what voice and audience mean (Sohn, Enger).

Yet another directed activity which produces whole-piece writing in an interesting form, is that of fable writing. This should be an activity attempted once the group is comfortable with writing will possibly take a risk in front of peers. Prior to giving any instructions to the class about the day's activities, the instructor should review the rules of dialogue (as a pre-writing activity) by placing samples on the board, mentioning only that dialogue will be used that day.

Then, without uttering the word fable, the teacher begins the following procedure, which was used in the Queens College English Department writing workshops to train teachers in whole-piece writing.
First, ask students to imagine that it is the middle of the night, and along a dark road comes a cow and an elephant. Then direct the class as follows:

1. Write what the cow says to the elephant. Allow up to three minutes. (The instructor should also write.)
2. Write what the elephant says to the cow. Again allow three minutes.
3. Imagine a natural catastrophe, an earthquake or storm, and write a few lines of narrative describing that catastrophe.
4. Write what the elephant says to the cow. Allow time.
5. Then write what the cow responds. Allow time.
6. Each individual should silently read over what has been written so far. Then skip a few lines and write: The moral of this fable is....
7. Each person should write three or four morals because it is easier to try several versions than to aim at one perfect one. (McFeely).

It is best not to mention the term "fable," lest it discourage those who are unsure of what it means, until the writing is done. Then note to the group that each person, including the teacher, has just written a complete literary structure, a fable. Time should then be allowed to have participants read their fables aloud in small groups or to the class if they choose. One of the originators of this whole-piece exercise, summarizes its benefits as observed in the classroom. "The energy inherent in the act of writing, the sense of community, grown
out of having taken some risks, and the pleasure of the structure of
the fable itself, heard over and over in so many permutations, become
evident in such an exercise" (Mc Feely, p. 9).

The same activity, which has already produced one form of
whole-piece writing, the fable, can be the springboard for developing
additional forms. For example, the class could have demonstrated to
them on the board the distinction between observation and inference as
follows. The statement, "This fable uses emotion-laden words like
cry, suffer, and pain," is an observation. The statement "This author
must be a sensitive person" is an inference. After this distinction
is clear, through several board examples and free discussion, free
writing time could be allowed for students to make observations or
inferences about someone else's work (perhaps that of a published
fable writer, or the fable of another student). In this way a class
can be introduced, rather comfortably, to writing a basic literary
essay (Mc Feely).

A final observation on fable writing and the possible follow-up
activities is that not all stages of the composing process must be
followed with every writing assignment. Some tasks are warm-ups,
mind-expanders, or schema-raisers, and are not revised and edited to
the stage of readiness for "other eyes."

A final suggestion of a form to develop confidence and facility in
writing is the journal entry. The teacher, during the initial
meetings of the class, explains what a journal is and instructs
students to divide a sheet into nine boxes and label each box with one
of the following headings: What, Where, Who, When, Why, How, Then, Now, and Someday. Students are then directed to jot down phrases in each box that will help them to remember their experiences that day, and their thoughts about them. Time is then allowed for students to write a journal entry, looking over the box-divided worksheets for ideas. The teacher models his/her journal entry and shares with the group (Sohn, Enger).

The journal entries are kept in a separate, take-home notebook and daily writing, even when class is not meeting, is encouraged. The student is advised to begin each entry on a separate page and to date each entry. Both teacher and students will find that at first it is difficult for thoughts to come, but later the process becomes much easier. Reading brief entries from published journals, from a variety of historical periods, will help students recognize the universal appeal of journal writing.

Several additional techniques to get a journal entry started are suggested by Sohn and Enger.

1. Just have students write non-stop, anything they're willing to share with class. The important thing is not to stop writing. If a student is stuck, suggest re-writing the same sentence over, until a new thought comes. Allow five minutes for this free writing.

2. Think of something important that happened today or recently that can be shared. The first sentence could be, "I was so happy when..." For twenty minutes, write about the topic
selected. Tell why the experience was important to you. Did it change you?

3. Find a photograph of yourself more than a year old. Try to remember what you were like at the time. What were you feeling at the time? How were you different then?

Other suggestions to practice writing in the classroom include the ambitious project of having someone write an autobiography. Another person may find that writing personal letters is the catalyst to getting started at writing. Still others may require the stimulus of a picture to stir the imagination. The teacher should have available several puzzling, intriguing, or ambiguous pictures. The student may be asked either to be the person in the picture and tell the story of how he/she got into the situation depicted, or to be an observer and tell about the person in the picture (Sohn, Enger).

Several techniques have been suggested to occasionally incorporate different literary forms, with a two-fold purpose intended: to develop creative and critical thinking skills; and to develop awareness of purpose, voice, and audience in the adult classroom. In the high school equivalency class all of the writing of various forms will be in preparation for the final exam requirement, which is to generate an expository of persuasive essay.

If a student has attempted a variety of writing forms over a period of time, and has experienced positive feedback in the classroom classroom, he/she may be willing to attempt an essay, which consists of a series of paragraphs about one subject.
The first type of essay to be considered is the expository essay. The instructor might choose to introduce the expository essay by giving a chalk-talk as follows. The essay you are invited to produce traditionally has four or more paragraphs, divided in this way.

The first paragraph or introduction contains the thesis statement, which contains controlling ideas that limit and direct the rest of the essay; it is the most important sentence in the essay.

The body paragraphs define, explain, clarify, and illustrate the thesis statement.

The conclusion paragraph usually restates the thesis statement in different words; it completes the essay (Reid).

The second type of essay to be considered in a high school equivalency class preparing to write the final examination is the persuasive essay, which differs from the expository essay in important ways. The expository essay presents a viewpoint and explains, clarifies, and illustrates it. The persuasive essay, if successful, persuades the reader that the espoused viewpoint is the valid one;
this is accomplished by providing support through facts, examples, statistics, personal experiences, or authoritative sources (Reid). The elements of a traditional persuasive essay may be represented graphically also.

The first paragraph or introduction is where you grab your reader's attention and establish yourself as a reliable, trustworthy person. You also state the thesis of your essay, outlining the problem as you see it.

The second paragraph proves your argument by valid reasoning or demonstrating cause and effect.

The third paragraph states an opposing argument and then shows how your position is superior.

The conclusion paragraph closes your argument and possibly raises questions still to be answered. To show you're not
just "blowing off steam," it presents a solution to the problem (Blake, 1985, p.3).

Since either essay type may be required on the high school equivalency exam, students should be able to successfully produce both types (Corrado).

The process for writing either type of essay follows the composing process stages that have been used with all forms of writing introduced thus far. Pre-writing involves selecting a topic, one that the student is interested in and knows something about, and then gathering information through brainstorming, discussing, reading, researching, or some other activities in order to raise the students' schemas.

The next step, which leads to the writing stage, is to have students write a tentative thesis statement. A suggestion to generate the thesis statement in a persuasive essay is to have the students complete an "I feel strongly that..." statement about the topic under discussion. What is written to complete the open-ended statement is the persuasive essay's thesis statement (Hawley).

To encourage student writers the teacher again should model the process and also plan class time to read published works, both expository and persuasive essays (Cooper, Odell). These essays should be of similar lengths to what students are attempting to write.

During the revising stage, small-group sharing with structured critiquing time can be of benefit to students. Another approach to
revision is suggested by the Panmans (another husband and wife team), who provide an individual checklist for the student to use in evaluating his own essay. Their checklist below, for example, is specifically focused toward the persuasive essay.

CHECKLIST

1. In my opening sentence(s), I included my purpose, audience, subject, and my status as writer (acronym PASS).

2. In my first paragraph, I stated two reasons that support my argument, expressed my opinion, and concluded the paragraph.

3. Each of my developmental paragraphs introduced and explained one reason in support of my argument.

4. In my concluding paragraph, I restated the subject of the essay, supported it, expressed my opinion and concluded the essay.

5. I used transitions to connect ideas and create unity in my writing.

6. I wrote complete sentences in which my spelling and mechanics are correct (Panmans, p. 341).

Presentation of an essay framework, such as those provided by Reid and Blake, repeated practice at essay writing (using self-evaluation sheet such as Panmans"), and frequent opportunities for peer critiquing as explained by Bader, are strategies suggested to give high school
equivalency candidates both the confidence and expertise needed to generate either the expository or persuasive essay.

An important concern, once an essay is written (in class or at the examination) to which teachers and students must give their attention, is the matter of the assessment or evaluation of the essay. The next section will address that concern.

Assessment of Persuasive Essay

The teacher who has brought students through the stages of the composing process to the final copy stage of essay still has a considerable task ahead. Specifically, the high school equivalency teacher's task is to advise students on holistic assessment, which is the rating system to be used by the rater-readers in Albany, who will judge HSE candidates' examination essays as Pass or Fail.

In the case of the RCT-W, the rating of the written work is first done by a local in-district reader; the students' papers are then re-rated, for confirmation, in Albany. The HSE-W will not be read locally, but will be rated by one or two rater-readers in Albany, the same cadre of readers who rate the RCT-W (Ormiston 2-8-85). The manual for teachers who rate the RCT-W contains detailed directions for rating papers, and includes a list of the characteristics of an exemplary essay, as follows.

a. Has an accurate perception of the writing task

b. Has a consistent point of view
c. Has a consistent temporal point of view (past, present)
d. Demonstrates a sense of audience
e. Demonstrates a general plan of organization or logical sequencing
f. Demonstrates coherence in paragraphs and smaller units
g. Uses appropriate transitions
h. Includes the appropriate level of generalization and excludes irrelevant details
i. Has no problem with syntax, vocabulary, or mechanics
j. Is error free (RCT-W booklet, p. 2).

This list must be applied when rating each paper.

The local raters are required to write their own responses to the essay task prior to doing any rating and are required to read several exemplary model answers, which are provided in the manual. After these steps, plus an informal discussion with other raters about the model exemplary model samples, the raters then begin to rate papers on 5-point intervals, with 65 as the minimum pass. A final directive to the raters is given in the manual, noting that frequent reference to the model or exemplary essays, plus a re-reading of the characteristics listed above, will help them to periodically re-set their rating accuracy.

When the Albany raters are reading the HSE-W essays, they will follow closely the method of the local RCT-W raters outlined above, with two exceptions. The HSE-W will be rated as Pass or Fail, and no
percent grade will be noted on the student's diploma. The HSE designation of Pass or Fail will be determined as follows.

1. If the first rater gives a Fail, there is a second reading. If second reading is a Pass, the paper is a Pass.
2. If the first rater gives a Pass, no second reading is required. It is a Pass.
3. If both first and second raters give a Fail, the paper is a Fail (Corrado).

A second difference in the HSE-W rating is that no "model essays" will be available for the rater-readers.

Having Albany readers rate the essays removes the individual HSE teacher from the summative evaluation role. However, if the writing process has been implemented in the classroom consistently, writing has been evaluated, and growth has been observed and guided by the teacher all along the way.

The ongoing classroom evaluation, sometimes called formative evaluation, has provided the teacher the opportunity of diagnosing problems and identifying strengths for individual students. Thus the HSE teacher's monitoring of progress will be formative; to the raters in Albany is left the responsiblity of summative evaluation (Cooper, Odell).

The following section of Chapter III reviews findings of other institutions which have conducted large-scale writing assessments. Some of the suggestions and cautions may be of assistance to NYS/HSE teachers as they approach this new testing requirement.
Reference to Other Large-Scale Assessments

Within the past decade, several large-scale assessments of writing samples have been initiated by state education departments, individual schools or colleges, and by testing services. Their findings offer valuable insights for teachers and administrators soon to be involved in implementing the NYS/HSE writing sample.

A 1979 study of the ACT English Usage Test by Huntley examined the validity of objective tests alone as a measure of rhetorical proficiency (as is the current method of assessing writing ability through the GED Writing Skills subtest). Findings suggest that the premise of the study is valid: Objective tests could be used as an indirect, 'passive' way to assess some of the features or components of that integrated process called composing (Huntley, p. 51). The organizational and language aspects of writing were found to correlate highly in both indirect (objective) and direct (writing sample) testing. The "audience" aspect did not correlate highly in both types of testing. The suggestion is offered by Huntley that the thinking/languaging process involved in writing may be unique to the composing process, and thus not easily measurable by objective test formats. Huntley's conclusion regarding the use of indirect and direct assessments is that the two types of testing are best used in combination to provide information for placing students. New York
State will be the first state to implement this combination testing in order to assess candidate writing skill. It is as yet unknown to teachers in the field how the inter-relatedness of the two scores will be regarded as part of the overall assessment process.

A 1982 study by Mc Craig for the Grosse Point, Michigan School District is described as an "every-student" assessment of developed abilities in writing for an entire school district (Mc Craig). Key findings of the Mc Craig study (which are applicable to adult students as well) are summarized below. The relationship of the NYS writing sample to each of the findings is also specified.

The study advises that the mode of discourse be explanatory discourse, not because the students' best writing occurs in this mode, but because it is the mode of expression necessary for conducting social and business affairs. Preliminary information from the NYS testing bureau states that the mode of discourse on the NYS/HSE exam will be either narrative, explanatory, or persuasive discourse (Corrado).

Mc Craig's study also concluded that students not be allowed to use dictionaries and other resources in composing the writing sample because testing is not teaching. Such use prevents judging of spelling ability and disrupts the composing process. It is more important to complete a flow of thought than it is to spell one of the words correctly on the first draft. In agreement with this study, the NYS
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The testing bureau has stated that no dictionary usage will be allowed during the NYS/HSE exam (Corrado).

The Mc Craig study allowed 45 minutes for the writing sample at the secondary level, with the option that teachers might suggest that the student draw a line when time had expired and then finish the writing. Completion almost always turned out to be irrelevant to the task of evaluating the writing. (The assessment task is to make a judgment about the developed abilities of the writer and a competent judge can arrive at a rating from one page almost as well as from three pages) (Mc Craig). Staff from the testing bureau stated in May, 1985 that the NYS/HSE exam would allow one hour for the writing of the essay (Corrado).

The Grosse Point "every-student" assessment concluded that collecting and scoring only one writing sample from each student was a questionable practice. The one paper approach was judged to be acceptable, though not preferable, when the purpose of the assessment was to do a comparison of group results. If a single-sample plan is used, the assessment yields a factual report of what a student did in a single incident; it assumes that performance is the same thing as competence. Grosse Point settled on collecting two samples as a reasonable compromise. (A multiple sample plan represents an attempt to find out what students are able to do, not what they happen to do in a single trial.) The NYS/HSE exam will collect only one writing
sample (Kratz). However, it will also have for assessment the results of the student's performance on the objective portion of the exam. This combination was found to yield valid information on assessment in Huntley's earlier-mentioned study.

Mc Craig's study concluded that students should be provided with two or three topics to select from, that it is not crucial to the quality of the writing whether an opening passage is provided for the student or not, and that impromptu writing is preferable to prepared writing. The NYS/HSE writing sample will provide a selection of topics, but will not include opening passages (Kratz). An impromptu writing sample will be collected for the NYS/HSE exam because the purpose for requiring the sample is to be able to make a judgment about the candidate's process of writing. A prepared copy is appropriate when information is needed about the product (Corrado).

Mc Craig's study used a holistic assessment procedure and judges whose performance was carefully monitored. The NYS/HSE exam will likewise evaluate holistically, using rater-readers selected and retained by the standards of the RCT, which has been in effect since 1979 (Corrado).

Mc Craig's "every-student" assessment for the entire school district resulted in several benefits, benefits which should also be realized in the NYS/HSE program statewide. The teaching of writing was improved. Workbooks and grammar were no longer defended as the
means of teaching how to write. Critical needs received more emphasis than others and achievement improved, as monitored through pre/post data. Finally, curriculum was modified and research was conducted.

A final study to be reviewed is a 1981 paper by Spandel from the Oregon Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing, a study which offers reasons why direct assessment is preferred over indirect. Recommendations from the study may be summarized in two categories: those referring to the classroom teacher, and those referring to the testing procedure itself.

For the classroom teacher, Spandel noted that direct measure testing is an improvement because it requires students to write as opposed to filling in blanks or making multiple-choice responses. Direct measures are to be understood Spandel noted not so much as tests as they are opportunities for students, through repeated practice, to improve writing skills. Again, the point is being made quite clearly that the focus is to be placed on process, not product.

Also, for the classroom teacher it is clarified that with direct assessment, expectations may be made clear for students; it is possible for students to know when goals have been reached.

The Spandel study also recommends that, for the testing procedure to have its full value, the writing exercise must have clear instructions that identify its purpose, audience, and form. Instructions should be understandable and bias-free, thus giving the student every opportunity to respond to his/her fullest capacity.
A final recommendation from Spandel, for the testing procedure, is that the item must approximate real-world circumstances, to be confident that the proficiency demonstrated is reflective of what would occur in real life. Factors that impact on real-world writing are student choice of content (within limits), a reasonable time limit, and freedom from undue pressure.

With reference to Spandel's recommendations to the classroom teachers, it should be noted that statewide teacher training sessions have been scheduled for September through December, 1985, sessions that will attempt to bring to NYS/HSE teachers an appreciation of both the reasons for and the benefits of a direct assessment of writing (Fadale).

It is to be hoped that, at its July 1986 debut, the NYS/HSE exam's writing sample will prove to have the above-mentioned characteristics of a good test instrument.

The review of the above sampling of large-scale assessment studies may be helpful in clarifying for HSE teachers the reasons why indirect assessment alone is not considered a sufficient measure of writing competency, and why some combination of direct and indirect assessment is soon to be mandated in the NYS/HSE testing program.

Huntley's study concludes that the combination of indirect and direct assessment provides the most complete information on a student's writing competency. Mc Craig's extensive study answers many
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relevant questions about the logistics of direct assessment and gives many valid reasons why "every-student" assessment through a direct measure is advantageous. Spandel explains how a direct assessment impacts in a positive way on classroom instruction and offers suggestions for testmakers to consider when creating test items.

The final chapter, Chapter IV, will discuss the implications of implementing the writing sample as a test requirement, and will suggest what further research might be indicated.

Chapter IV

_Evaluation in Classroom Procedure_

The July 1986 implementation of the NYS/HSE writing sample requirement has the potential to effect positive changes in several areas: individual classroom teaching; students' writing competencies; statewide program direction; and new research topic possibilities.

In individual classrooms, it is anticipated that HSE teachers will become more effective overall in their instruction of writing. Prior to introducing writing as a process, HSE teachers, through inservice and supportive supervision, will have been given the opportunity to review current educational research, theory, and practice, and to adapt the new learnings to their individual styles (Hammond). It is also anticipated that here will be an increase in dialogue between
regular high school staff and HSE staff as the latter request assistance from the 7-12 grade instructors, who have been preparing students for the RCT since 1979, and whose input and experience will be of value. This sharing of materials and procedures should be of benefit to both groups of teachers.

It is also anticipated that teachers and students in the HSE program will experience a dramatic change in classroom dynamics, as they work together in this writing process venture. Donald Graves has directed a message to teachers involved in writing as a process. He writes that teachers themselves can no longer be the sole sources and arbiters of student writing. Since teachers know that writing is, in essence, evidence of critical thought and reasoning, they must afford students the opportunity to develop these skills; writing assignments must allow for student ownership. In Graves' view, the teacher of writing will be led to accept the role of the student as primary in the writing process, and the teacher's own role as secondary, with teacher acting as facilitator, nurturing other adults to independent thought and action. This is a replacement of the earlier-mentioned obsolete model of the asymmetrical teacher/student arrangement, managed by the "authority figure" teacher. It is an anticipated teacher learning outcome that the HSE teacher of writing will gradually come to feel comfortable in this facilitator role.
Improved Writing Competencies

In addition to changed behaviors by teachers and students in the classroom in their regard for each other, theorists and practitioners anticipate that a gradual improvement in student writing competencies can be expected as an effect of implementing the writing requirement.

Weinstein states that a positive, constructive attitude by the teacher of writing, using a minimal methodology, will improve adult writing skills. The following activities are listed in Weinstein's minimum methodology:

1. Require some writing every day.
2. Use students' papers as texts frequently.
3. Provide for sharing and responding to students' papers.
4. Teach correctness in context, not as isolated skills.
5. Evaluate whole pieces of writing by responding positively and limiting corrections to one or two points per writing.
6. Integrate reading with writing as often as possible.
7. Write with students.

It is Weinstein's belief that, if no other curriculum change is implemented, these innovations alone will improve students' abilities to write intelligible communications. This methodology, initiated by Weinstein, has been in place at La Guardia Community College since 1983, and in an informal observation, has been seen to have a positive effect on the writing competencies of basic writing students (Weinstein).
Schlawin, in her analysis of 1983 PCT and RCT-W samples concludes that, as a result of having implemented writing process in 7-12 classrooms, "it seems that more students can write at least passably" (Schlawin).

In these two informal analyses of the effects of introducing writing as a process, reviewers concluded that students' writing competencies improved. It may be anticipated that in HSE classrooms where writing as a process is consistently practiced, writing competencies will similarly improve.

**Impact on Program**

It is further anticipated that planning for the 1986 writing sample requirement will begin to bring about changes in programs statewide. Some changes have already begun. In May 1985 a request for proposals to train teachers statewide (to teach the writing process) was issued. In June 1985 the grant to do this training was awarded to the Two Year College Development Center at Albany. In July 1985 an advisory committee (including this writer) met at the Two Year College Development Center in Albany, to accomplish a two-fold task:

1. To assist project consultants in the development of a training model for introducing writing process and holistic scoring to HSE teachers and
2. To offer recommendations to the project consultants regarding content of the training program

At this July meeting several concerns surfaced regarding the writing process as approached in the HSE classroom. Each of these concerns must be fully addressed at the statewide level.

The first concern was in the area of classroom management. Some basic-level students will require instruction at the most rudimentary levels of writing. Material must be adapted or created to help these students with the writing process.

At all levels, teachers and students are to be encouraged to use writing as a "tool for learning" across the content area curriculum. Just how much of this innovative approach will be understood and accepted by teachers who have perceived their task quite differently in the past is an unanswered question.

Finally, with the higher level student in the HSE classroom, where immediate preparation for the HSE exam is the focus, the stages of the writing process must be modelled and practiced, and time must be given to writing several actual essays of different types.

Since all of these teaching objectives must be addressed within the constraints of a six hour per week class time, there will be great concern (in addition to curriculum and staff development) about classroom management.

At the statewide level, therefore, support and suggestions should be offered to encourage HSE instructors to accomplish the following
tasks: incorporating basic writing skills; introducing writing as a learning tool; and involving writing process daily in the classroom. Classroom management then, is a major area of concern that will require ongoing program direction on a statewide basis.

A second area of concern that surfaced at the advisory committee meeting was the need to conduct staff development on an ongoing, recursive basis. One obvious reason is that HSE instructors' ranks, due to the part-time nature of the position, have a high turnover rate, and unexperienced staff will be beginning each semester.

Staff development also should be ongoing because of the nature of the writing process itself. Teachers, as writers, should be given the opportunity, through regular inservice training, to do professional self-evaluation and peer evaluation of writing.

A third reason for ongoing staff development is that developed by John Andola, in his review of his district's design for a K-12 writing program. Andola contends that teachers themselves need to feel "ownership" in a new program if that program is to succeed. Andola writes:

One or two people, knowledgeable about the district's needs, State directions, current research, and educational practice, can draw up the skeletal design for the program, which can then be gradually fleshed out as groups of teachers and administrators respond to it. In this way everyone affected by the program can
be involved at an early stage, but the actual writing of the program will be guided by the curriculum experts (Andola, p. 149).

Consultants for the Two Year College Development Center Writing Project, Dorothy Hammond and Joseph Mangano, both very experienced in SED design curriculum and program management, drew up the training design for the entire state. Selected advisers from throughout the state helped to put the design in its final form before cadres of trainers were prepared through workshops to train teachers to implement writing process in HSE classrooms.

As the writing process implementation is, by stages, put into place in HSE classrooms, the instructional program, statewide, can only benefit from the state education department's support in the areas of classroom management and in an ongoing plan for staff development in the area of writing.

_Suggested Further Research_

Introduction of the writing process initiates a major change in teaching emphasis in HSE programs statewide with far-reaching effects. Such a large-scale innovation invites research, in each of the five areas connected with the diagnostic-prescriptive teaching model: assessment, diagnosis, prescription, instruction, and evaluation.
Assessment

It is of concern to HSE instructors that an assessment of an individual's writing skill be made soon after entry into a class to make efficient use of the instructional time. What assessment tool, teacher-made, or published, might be developed to facilitate initial assessment? Or is refinement of a teacher's holistic scoring skills a better solution?

Will the NYS/ED, at a future date, mandate that writing skill levels be pre and post tested? To serve what purpose?

Each of these issues invites research and provides topics for further study.

Diagnosis

Another area of concern in the classroom is that of diagnosis. Formative evaluation is of course ongoing in all the content areas in the HSE classroom. What degree of record-keeping or notation of ongoing diagnosis is desirable or helpful? Perhaps a list of diagnostic criteria in writing skills should be developed for students and instructors alike. What should be included in the criteria? What voice will HSE instructors from different areas of the state have in developing the criteria?

These and related questions provide many research possibilities.
Prescription

A major concern in the prescriptive area relates to the RCT-W practice of providing schools throughout the state with a list of twenty-five possible topics from which the one upcoming essay topic will be chosen. Is it advisable that the same procedure be followed for the essay portion of the NYS/HSE exam? How might this in turn affect the teaching of writing as process versus "teaching to the test?"

The politics of test construction (NYS Testing Bureau alone or in conjunction with the national GED Test Service) will also impact on how the teacher prescribes to assist students. Not knowing who constructs the test and how it relates to the rest of the exam handicaps the teacher and the student. Solutions to these problems could be provided by research prior to the July '86 implementation.

Instruction

An important but not often addressed concern is for those who prepare for the HSE exam at home, either independently or through a supervised home-study program. What kinds of instructional materials can be provided that will be helpful to an isolated student? The student working alone does not have the benefit of teacher direction or peer sharing in improving writing skills.

A major revision of the home-study approach will be required to include writing process. Material also should be provided for the
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independent student. Hopefully publishers will research before publishing to meet this new mandate.

In the area of curriculum also, a question arises as to the reciprocal nature of reading and writing. What will be the nature and scope of improved reading as a result of increased emphasis on writing in the HSE classroom? What collaboration of materials should be designed by publishers of adult materials to achieve the two goals - improved reading and improved writing? Will they make the connection?

Evaluation

As the writing sample requirement becomes a reality, a recognized part of the HSE exam, a further evolution of the writing task may develop in the future. Will students' performances be better judged if they are required to write two different pieces of writing, or two different forms of writing? Will or should writing be done on the same or different days as the objective test? If so, what will the cost factor be? Can increased cost be justified by the greater reliability of two-piece assessment?

Another question arises concerning the value of the HSE exam in the eyes of the community. Is it likely that this revised, more rigorous test instrument will result in a greater respect for the document itself? How will future HSE graduates fare versus regular high school graduates in job and school placement? What will
statistics indicate as to the further trainability of the future HSE graduate in comparison with that of the regular high school graduate?

How will the NYS writing sample requirement impact on the GED Test Service's concept of what their writing sample requirement should be (due in 1988)? Is it advisable, likely, or even possible that, prior to the July 1986 NYS implementation, an agreement be reached between the NYS Testing Bureau and the GED Testing Service, so that the two groups are working in concert to develop one writing task? Would NYS then pilot the program for the rest of the nation? Each of these questions raises multiple research possibilities.

Several questions relating to the connection between the HSE-W and the RCT-W could be rich resources for further research. The state plan at present requires an essay only for the HSE exam. The RCT-W, in contrast, requires an essay, a letter, and a report. What are the reasons for and against, adding additional tasks to the HSE exam?

What would be the logistics of scoring? How would validity and reliability be assured? Would this result in a greater percentage of overall "dropouts," individuals who could not meet the HSE task requirements? Each question offers further research possibilities to those concerned with writing skill and its assessment at the HSE level.

Each question raised should be a legitimate concern of adult educators in the HSE programs throughout New York State. Thoughtful
and studied responses that will result from research on these issues will contribute to the improvement of the HSE program overall.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper is to provide information and assistance to high school equivalency instructors whose task is to prepare students to pass the NYS/HSE exam. It is anticipated that this study will be made available through the NYS/ED for dissemination to high school equivalency instructors in New York State. The development of the exam to the present day, including the anticipated addition of a writing task, has been overviewed. The steps in the writing process, and some ways to apply and evaluate the writing process in an adult classroom, have been reviewed. In addition, comments from educators who have been responsible for administering similar, large-scale, direct assessments of writing process, were summarized. Conjectures on the implications that the test implementation might have regarding classroom procedure, students' competencies, and statewide program direction, were made.

A final section offered several possible research topics that, if investigated, will provide material for continued improvement of the HSE program in future years. The thesis provides information, offers some suggestions, and raises many questions, all with the singular purpose of helping HSE instructors to have greater familiarity with the scope of the writing process and to, in turn, provide the environment and instruction that will allow students to learn to communicate better through the process of writing.
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