

Evaluation Report  
UC Diagnostic Writing Service

**CSE Technical Report 527**

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**EVALUATION REPORT  
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The University of California Diagnostic Writing Service (DWS) was developed collaboratively by the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and Educational Testing Service (ETS). DWS offers high school students and their teachers the opportunity to use college-level writing exams—prior versions of the Subject A exam for UC and the English Placement Test (EPT) for CSU—and receive diagnostic feedback on their essays from university readers. The goal is to strengthen high school students’ writing skills and increase general literacy. In providing this service, DWS serves multiple purposes: 11th-grade students and their teachers have direct exposure to the universities’ expectations for college-level writing; students receive diagnostic information about their writing proficiency and recommendations on how to improve their writing skills; and teachers are informed about the efficacy of their instruction in preparing students for college writing and are given recommendations about how to do so more effectively. Finally, tools and conceptual structures for writing are provided that can be integrated directly into high school classroom teaching and learning practices. DWS targets 11th-grade classrooms for this project to allow teachers and students time to hone their writing skills prior to college entry. Furthermore, the project aims to serve *all* students in participating schools, including English language learners, by providing opportunities to assess students’ abilities in literacy experiences required for future academic success.

These are ambitious and important long-term goals that will take time and systematic development to accomplish. Currently in an early stage of development, DWS contracted with the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE) to conduct an independent study of its second pilot. The evaluation presented here is intended to provide formative information that will enable DWS to assess the value of the project for teachers and students and to hone its effectiveness for future use and wider implementation. In the sections that follow, we provide an overview of the evaluation questions and methodologies used in the study, summarize the findings by evaluation question, and conclude with recommendations for the future of DWS.

### **Background on the DWS and Evaluation**

DWS developed an initial diagnostic package and technology-assisted delivery system and tested it during the fall of 1998 with a total of 13 teachers at six California high schools. The initial prototype included writing prompts from prior University-wide Subject A Examinations and English Placement Tests. The Subject A prompt required students to read a nonfiction, informational excerpt prior to writing an essay related to the text; the EPT prompt did not include a reading passage but instead asked students to respond to an essay prompt based on their prior experiences. In addition to directions for test administration and test materials, teachers and students were provided with rubrics developed by university readers for scoring the essays. Sample essays representing different levels of performance accompanied commentaries explaining the essay scores. After students responded to the prompts, their essays were submitted for scoring by UC or CSU readers, as appropriate. Feedback returned to students included an overall evaluation of each student's essay and diagnostic comments based on a number of categories of writing performance. Both Web- and paper-based delivery systems were used for the prototype testing. The Web version of the delivery system provided resources and feedback for both individual students and their teachers through a URL.

### **Results From the Fall 1998 Prototype**

Data from the initial pilot test, reported in an internal evaluation (Storms & Sheingold, 1999), were generally positive and indicated that teachers and students were enthusiastic about the potential value of DWS. Interviews, however, also raised

a number of issues about the program: DWS's purpose and how it was intended to be used by teachers; how to integrate DWS into the curriculum of participating classes; the comprehensibility and utility of the feedback received; logistical concerns around administration and return of diagnostic feedback; and some teachers' hesitation to use the DWS Subject A Exam with students of all skill levels and proficiencies, particularly those not in college bound or honors-type courses.

### **Spring Pilot 1999**

Based on feedback from the fall pilot test, the writing service was refined and a more comprehensive pilot test was conducted during the spring of 1999. The spring pilot was to encompass a total of 27 high schools across the state, including the 6 schools from the fall prototype. Participating schools agreed to administer DWS to 100 students at each site, in intact classrooms representing a range of abilities. Approximately half of the students were to respond to the Subject A prompt and half were to respond to the EPT prompt. Special efforts were made to include classrooms that served English language learners (ELLs). In most cases, DWS was administered during the period of March 15-April 16, 1999; student essays were scored and feedback returned to test sites by May 1999. A small number of schools requested an extension of the testing time frame due to scheduling conflicts; all participating schools received feedback prior to the conclusion of the 1998-1999 school year.

### **Evaluation Issues for the Current Study**

We concentrated our evaluation of the second pilot test on issues raised during the pilot test administration and of particular interest to the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) committee and the University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE). These research questions included how DWS was used with the intended population, DWS usability, comprehensibility and utility of feedback, differences between Subject A and EPT, and the impact of DWS on teachers and students.

1. DWS Use With Intended Student Populations
  - Selection process for project participation and descriptions of classes
  - Range of student abilities represented
2. DWS Usability
  - Purpose in using DWS
  - Administration conditions
  - Ease of delivery system use
  - Similarities and differences in paper and computer-based platforms
3. Comprehensibility and Utility of DWS Feedback
  - Value, importance, and comprehensibility of feedback to teachers and students
  - Usefulness of overall evaluations and diagnostic messages
  - Rubric alignment with writing assessments used at schools
4. DWS Impact on Teaching and Learning
  - DWS resources used with students
  - Classroom uses of DWS
  - Curricular and instructional changes based on DWS
  - DWS influence on teachers' expectations for students or students' expectations for future education
  - Value of DWS to teachers and students
  - DWS use with ELLs and AVID students
5. Reader Perceptions
  - Reader reaction to DWS involvement
  - Scoring process
  - Future involvement with DWS

The timing of essay administration and feedback had important implications for the evaluation, because essay results were received too late in the school year to be used extensively for immediate curriculum planning and teaching. Further, the schedule provided a very narrow window of time prior to the end of the school year for collecting information from schools regarding the project. Because of these scheduling constraints and given the relatively early stage of DWS development and implementation, we focused the evaluation on obtaining immediate feedback from

teachers, students and university readers to investigate their perspectives on the value of DWS and to inform future project development.

### **Sample and Instrumentation**

To address these evaluation issues, surveys were mailed to every teacher participating in the spring field test at each of the 27 participating schools (22 of which submitted essays), and interviews were conducted with a sample of schools and teachers. The survey gathered broad information on the five issues outlined above, whereas interviews were designed to provide qualitative information and richer perspectives, particularly with regard to DWS feedback and how DWS's usability and utility could be improved. The interview sample included three prototype schools from the fall pilot plus six additional schools, some of which committed to using DWS with ELL/AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students. Survey data from students were also collected. Additionally, we surveyed a sample of DWS readers in May 1999 after readers had completed essay evaluations.

The study drew on data from surveys and interviews designed and administered by ETS<sup>1</sup> and was augmented by additional interviews conducted by CSE. Information on the total number of schools, teachers, students and essays submitted for scoring (provided by ETS) is found in Table 1. Of the 27 participating schools, 22 schools submitted essays to university readers. Survey data are available from a subsample of those teachers and students who submitted essays to readers: A number of teachers and students at DWS schools elected not to participate in the survey or the interviews. Surveys were returned from 24 teachers at 14 different schools; 744 student surveys were collected. Twenty teachers from 13 different schools were interviewed on-site or by telephone. (See Appendixes A, B, C, and D for the Teacher Survey, Student Survey, Reader Survey, and Teacher Interview Protocol, respectively.)

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Karen Sheingold, Barbara Storms, and their colleagues at ETS for sharing the data with us.

Table 1  
DWS Spring 1999 Pilot Schools

School	County	Teacher surveys	Student surveys	Teacher interviews (CSE / ETS)
Arlington	Riverside	1	16	1
Brawley	Imperial	1	63	0
Calexico	Imperial	1	26	0
Carson	Los Angeles	3	77	2
Chatsworth	Los Angeles	0	0	3
Dos Pueblos	Santa Barbara	3	71	1
Elk Grove	Sacramento	0	0	0
Florin	Sacramento	2	31	1
Golden West	Tulare	1	30	1
Granada Hills	Los Angeles	4	123	3
Hoover	San Diego	2	23	2
Int'l Polytechnic	Los Angeles	1	63	0
Laguna Creek <sup>a</sup>	Sacramento	1	35	2
Marshall	Los Angeles	1	21	0
North	Riverside	0	0	0
Parlier	Fresno	1	75	0
Riverside 2	Riverside	0	0	0
Riverside 3	Riverside	0	0	0
San Marcos	Santa Barbara	2	90	1
San Pasqual	San Diego	0	0	1
Santa Paula	Ventura	0	0	0
Sylmar	Los Angeles	0	0	0
Temecula Valley	Riverside	0	0	1
Washington Union	Fresno	0	0	1
Total		24 Teacher surveys	744 Student surveys	20 12 (CSE) / 8 (ETS) Teacher interviews

Note. Shading indicates use of on-line DWS.

<sup>a</sup> Used both on-line and paper DWS.



## **Findings**

Results in this section are presented according to our research questions. Data were drawn from teacher surveys and interviews and student surveys. Overall, the data show that teachers were modestly enthusiastic about their participation in DWS. Many teachers saw their involvement with DWS as an opportunity for professional growth through contact with the university, while simultaneously supporting the goal of helping high school students improve the quality of their writing. Although end-of-year schedule conflicts limited the extent to which teachers were able to connect DWS activities with their instruction and curriculum, many teachers indicated they had plans to incorporate DWS concepts into their teaching during the coming academic year. Students, too, saw value in the project but were somewhat disappointed in their essay feedback from university readers. Teachers and students agreed that feedback from DWS provided a wide range of information about students' writing along with specific and welcome information on how to improve students' writing. The revised user interface of the on-line version of the essay prompts was well received by teachers and students; on-line screens were easy to use, and connections to the DWS Web site were readily accomplished. Relatively few problems were reported with on-line transmission of essays. Feedback was provided to most students in a timely manner in both paper and on-line conditions.

### **DWS Use With Intended Student Populations**

**Spring 1999 pilot participants.** Schools participating in the DWS spring 1999 pilot were located in northern, central and southern California and included urban, suburban and rural schools. A wide range of student socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnic backgrounds were represented at these schools. Some of these sites traditionally send a large proportion of their graduating students to UC or CSU. Other schools have few if any students continue their education at the university level. The majority of DWS teachers had prior involvement with other local and statewide writing projects. Of the 744 students who returned surveys, 718 were 11th-grade students. The remaining students were 12th graders.

**Selection process for DWS participation and class descriptions.** The type of classes represented in the DWS spring pilot included honors English, Advanced Placement (AP), composition, humanities, “regular” English and English as a Second Language sections. Teachers were the primary decision makers regarding which particular classes and which particular students within those classes would submit essays and the type of prompt (Subject A Exam or English Placement Test) to which students would respond. In general, specific classes and students were selected to participate in the project based on interest and the likelihood of their attending college and writing ability. Students who responded to the Subject A prompt were typically in advanced, honors or Advanced Placement (AP) English classes. Some students who wrote EPT essays were in advanced English classes, but most were in composition or regular English classes. In some instances, teachers used both prompts within a single class; half of the students responded to the Subject A prompt and the other half used the EPT. A veteran teacher with experience reading AP exams commented about the types of students who responded to each prompt:

**Excerpt 1**

I’ve taught a broad spectrum of students, everything from AP to what we used to call “remedial” classes. Most of the time, students who are in the advanced classes are being groomed for further academic studies. You ask them about their future plans and they not only know where they want to do their undergraduate work, but also their graduate work. There’s a culture of achievement instilled in them. It turns out, however, that there are also students who are very accomplished writers in some of my “regular” English classes. And it’s these students I believe it’s so important to reach, and who DWS can really support. That’s why I selected students from all interest, ability and achievement levels to do DWS.

**Range of student abilities represented.** Students who participated in the spring pilot were culled from a wide range of writing proficiencies. The majority of students who responded to the Subject A prompt were considered to be “stronger writers” by their teachers. The EPT prompt was used in classes where students were

viewed by their teachers as “weaker writers.” In some cases, however, teachers gave the Subject A prompt to students in their “regular” English classes. English language learners (ELLs) were nested within all types of classes. Additionally, four Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classes also used DWS.

To a certain extent, use of DWS did appear to reinforce tracking of students in that most teachers did not believe students in “regular” English courses were sophisticated enough as writers to respond to either the EPT or the Subject A prompt. This decision was based on teachers’ perceptions of students’ ability and affect, in the sense that many teachers did not believe some of their students possessed the reading and writing skills necessary for college. Simultaneously, teachers wanted to “protect” weaker writers from receiving feedback that could potentially influence these students’ perceptions of their developing writing competencies.

A few teachers reported surprising or unanticipated outcomes with regard to student performance on the essays: A small number of students with identified learning disabilities but strong writing competencies wrote essays that received “adequate writer” or “strong writer” evaluations. In this case, students broke the mold regarding typical or expected outcomes for writing competencies.

### **DWS Usability**

Overall, teachers and students interpreted the purpose of DWS in a variety of ways, found DWS easy to use, and valued the experience of having university readers evaluate the essays.

**Purpose in using DWS.** There was a range in teacher understanding of the nature of and purpose for using DWS. Approximately one third of the teachers who used DWS viewed the service primarily as an opportunity for students to write essays in a timed-writing format that simulated the writing proficiency exam students take as high school seniors. As such, teachers used DWS prompts in ways that were consistent with more formal testing; that is, there was no previewing of the prompts or use of other accompanying DWS materials. Commented one teacher: “I used it as a ‘cold’ assessment of student writing. I wanted students to get an exact critique of their writing.” Another third of the teachers saw the test primarily as a

way to get information about their students' writing abilities from nonbiased, expert readers who would provide realistic assessments of students' writing proficiencies. The remaining third of the teachers viewed DWS as an instructional tool, and devoted class time to previewing and utilizing all DWS materials, including the prompts, rubrics and sample essays. This group of teachers also noted the advantages of "test practice" and outside readers assessing student work. The majority of students saw DWS primarily as an opportunity to have their writing skills assessed by experts. Excerpt 2 below presents comments from two teachers about their purpose(s) for using DWS.

### **Excerpt 2**

Interviewer: What were your primary purposes for using the DWS with these classes?

Teacher 1: Credibility. What it [DWS] allows me to do is to give students access to an established university-level rubric, and because they pull up the rubric themselves on the Internet and see the emblems of both the CSU and the UC systems, they know that it is credible. Additionally, having university professors assess their work is helpful for them. What it does for me in, in teaching a college-level class, is that it gives the class more integrity and it gives me a little bit more . . . influence.

Interviewer: What were your primary purposes for using the DWS with these classes?

Teacher 2: Most of this class is probably going to go to UC, and they're going to be taking the Subject A exam, and I thought it would be a very good experience for them to do it (write an essay) ahead of time. And also because . . . I thought it would be very, very helpful for these students to have that kind of feedback on their writing skills.

As would be expected, a teacher's purpose in using DWS had an impact on how he or she used the DWS materials and feedback instructionally. These points

are elaborated in the section that follows on DWS administration conditions and later in the section that presents information on DWS impact on teaching and learning.

**DWS administration conditions.** Data collected from teachers and students during the fall 1998 DWS prototype suggested that flexibility in administration (how the service was to be used in class) was an important feature of the service to teachers. The spring 1999 DWS pilot continued to allow teachers flexibility in administration of the writing prompts. At some schools, students wrote essays in a test-like setting, that is, without previewing prompts or other accompanying materials. In other schools, students took home DWS materials, wrote their essays independently, and then submitted their work to readers. In yet other schools, students discussed the scoring rubrics, previewed the prompts, and spent class time involved with other prewriting activities in preparation for writing their essays.

Thus, DWS was administered in a variety of ways at different schools, in accordance with teachers' understandings and their purpose for using DWS. Clearly, differing task conditions had an impact on writing performance. For example, essays written "cold" within a constrained or reduced time frame were likely to be of less than optimal quality, giving students the impression that their writing was weak or inadequate. Some teachers, recognizing the impact that varying the administration conditions has on student performance, reported frustration surrounding the lack of clarity on the "rules" for essay administration. This observation occurred primarily in cases where students responded to the Subject A prompt during their regular high school time frame of a 50-minute class period. Traditionally, students are allocated two hours for the completion of the Subject A task.

The essay submission format—that is, the way in which essays were transmitted to readers for scoring—was also tied to a number of different factors at schools. In some instances, teachers wanted the essay writing process to accurately reflect the future testing procedure; thus, students wrote their essays in a timed format, on paper. At other schools, where teachers focused more on the "diagnostic" capacity of DWS, students wrote the essays at home using word processing tools and brought disc copies of their essays to submit for electronic scoring.

Open-ended survey responses and interviews revealed that scheduling considerations influenced the format in which students submitted their essays. Most schools had limited access to computers and had to reserve lab time during which students could either write essays at the computer or submit completed essays by typing (or cutting and pasting) their prewritten responses. Setting up the computers for essay submission was a time-consuming process, particularly for less technologically savvy teachers. Teachers reported, however, that once they had completed the process of submitting essays on-line, they felt more confident about their ability to do so in the future. One teacher from a large, urban high school commented about the experience of submitting essays on-line:

### **Excerpt 3**

It was really a challenge to get my students from one end of the campus to the other, to the computer lab, get them logged on and have them complete their essays in the allotted time frame [50 minutes]. We share the lab with all the other [2500] students and teachers at the school, so trying to get the computers set up, with the corresponding access codes, was really a challenge. But now I'm a veteran, an expert. So the next time I do it [use DWS on-line], I'll definitely be ready. I know the program.

At schools where essays were submitted on-line, a number of classes experienced difficulties with access codes. In some instances, access codes were not accepted by the system; other teachers reported that they needed more codes than were issued by DWS. One teacher at a school where essays were submitted on-line noted, "Some students had great difficulty with their access codes; some were invalid and others previously used. As a result, students were uncertain if their essays had been received by the service."

**Ease of use of delivery system.** Table 2 displays results from teacher surveys regarding the usability of DWS. Overall, teachers were satisfied with the process of sending essays to the readers and receiving feedback and scored essays from them. Improvements made to the screens based on pilot test results were well received by classes using the on-line delivery system. DWS was relatively easy for students to

Table 2  
DWS Delivery System (n = 24)

DWS ease of use	Mean (SD)
<i>Please CIRCLE a number to rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:</i>	
Scheduling conflicts limited our use of the DWS (e.g., fixed length class periods, computer access, student testing program).	2.8 (0.9)
It was inconvenient to interrupt my usual class activities to use the DWS.	2.1 (0.6)
(If you used the on-line system) The on-line software was easy for my students to use.	3.2 (0.8)
(If you used the on-line system) Some of the on-line screens were difficult to navigate.	2.3 (0.5)
(If you used the on-line system) We could usually get a connection to the DWS Web site.	3.2 (0.4)
(If you used the on-line system) We were rarely disconnected from the DWS Web site while using it.	3.2 (0.4)

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree, NA = Not applicable. Scores were inverted for ease of interpretation.

use; teachers and students were able to readily establish on-line connections and were rarely disconnected.

**Similarities and differences in paper and computer-based platforms.** No significant differences in overall satisfaction with DWS were found between students who submitted their essays on paper and those who submitted their essays on-line. However, turn-around time for essay feedback was shorter for the on-line group. Teachers found it easier to have students review their essays when the feedback was returned more quickly. In a classroom where essays were submitted on paper, one teacher observed, “By the time the essay feedback arrived, the students were a little cold—their whole essay idea was cold.”

One notable difference between the paper and on-line versions of the service related to class-level information on student performance. Class summaries of student essay feedback were provided only to teachers whose students submitted essays on-line. A number of teachers who were interviewed requested that whole-class information be included with individual student performance for both paper and on-line essays. Interestingly, although most teachers in on-line classes were

aware of the summaries, few had accessed the information by the conclusion of the school year. Teachers who did access the on-line class summaries shared the information with students, with other DWS teachers and, in some cases, with teachers who were not part of the DWS project. A few teachers made systematic use of the on-line summaries and generated their own statistics for their students' essay performance. Excerpt 4 is an example from a teacher who used the on-line class summaries to inform instructional practices.

#### **Excerpt 4**

Once I accessed my classes' summary information, I tallied all of their overall evaluations using a spreadsheet. I ran a couple of analyses to see if there were differences between my two classes (who used DWS). One of the classes was honors English and the other was a regular English class. I was also looking for patterns in the feedback to see if the comments were random, relating to individual students, or if the comments were sort of across-the-board kinds of things that students needed to work on, certain areas where *all* my students were weak, places where we need to do further work.

#### **Comprehensibility and Utility of DWS Feedback**

Essay feedback consisted of diagnostic comments and overall evaluations; similar but distinct scoring rubrics for the Subject A Exam and EPT were developed and refined by a team of readers from the University of California and the California State University. The overall evaluation was based on a 4-point scale and was used to provide a general, holistic indication of a student's level of preparation for university-level writing. Diagnostic statements were used to provide specific feedback on a number of dimensions of student writing. Nested within the diagnostic statements were specific suggestions about what students and teachers could do to strengthen students' writing. See Appendix E for a sample of the Subject A and EPT prompts or <http://www.essayeval.org> to access the complete writing package.

**Value, importance, and comprehensibility of DWS feedback.** Feedback on essays was the most important aspect of DWS to teachers and students alike. In



general, teachers viewed the feedback as confirming their own assessments of students' writing and were modestly positive about its benefits. Table 3 displays teachers' perceptions of the feedback provided for their students' essays. The majority of teachers found the turn-around time for essays to be satisfactory. Most teachers also agreed that DWS feedback provided teachers with a clearer understanding of students' level of preparation for writing at the university level. Access to the full range of diagnostic statements was particularly important to teachers; this information was used by teachers for assessment purposes for their students, and had instructional implications.

Teachers responded in positive ways to questions about their impressions of student response to the essay feedback (Table 4). In particular, teachers noted that students were highly interested in reading and reviewing feedback provided by the

Table 3  
Teachers' Perceptions of DWS Feedback Provided for Students' Essays ( $n = 24$ )

Teacher ratings of DWS feedback	Mean (SD)
<i>Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:</i>	
Feedback was returned soon enough to be useful.	3.1 (0.5)
Some of the language in the diagnostic statements was difficult for me to understand.	1.7 (0.7)
Using the DWS gave me new information about what is expected in college-level writing.	2.9 (0.8)
DWS feedback gave me new information about the strengths and weaknesses in my students' writing.	2.7 (0.8)
Feedback from the DWS gave me new information about how prepared my students are for college-level writing.	3.0 (0.8)
Using the DWS helped me generate new ideas about how to help my students improve their writing.	3.0 (0.9)
It was important to me that the DWS feedback came from college.	3.6 (0.6)
It was useful for me to see the full list of diagnostic statements.	3.7 (0.5)

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree, NA = Not applicable. Scores were inverted for ease of interpretation.

Table 4

DWS Feedback: Teachers' Impressions of Students' Response ( $n = 24$ )

Teacher ratings of DWS feedback	Mean (SD)
<i>Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:</i>	
Students received more positive feedback than I expected.	2.5 (0.8)
Students received more negative feedback than I expected.	2.3 (0.6)
It was sometimes hard for the students to see how an overall evaluation related to diagnostic statements about the strengths and weaknesses in their DWS essays.	2.6 (0.8)
Students were interested in receiving feedback on their essays.	3.7 (0.5)
My students generally could understand the feedback.	3.0 (0.9)
The feedback that students received was specific enough to be helpful.	3.0 (0.7)
Stronger writers were more likely than weaker writers to reread or revise their essays in light of the DWS feedback.	3.4 (0.7)
Students usually thought the overall evaluations of their essays were consistent with the diagnostic statements from the readers	2.7 (0.6)

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree, NA = Not applicable. Scores were inverted for ease of interpretation.

readers, that strong writers were more likely to revise their essays based on the feedback provided, and that the feedback was generally understandable and helpful to students. Teachers were less positive in their ratings of students' understandings of the relationship between the diagnostic statements and the overall evaluations. Teachers commented during interviews that it was difficult for students to connect specific diagnostic statements with their actual essays: The service does not allow readers to mark specific passages as references, nor were readers permitted to personalize comments to students.

Feedback, for both the overall evaluations and the diagnostic statements, has undergone major revision since the initial pilot in the fall of 1998. However, many teachers commented that, particularly for the lower end of the scale, they viewed the feedback as still too negative. Terms such as "adequate" failed to capture the high level of writing proficiency demonstrated by their students. Teachers and students

requested further refinements in the overall evaluations. In Excerpt 5, teachers specifically suggest more positive feedback for students regarding their writing competencies. Teacher 1 used DWS with AP English classes; Teacher 2 used DWS in two different honors English classes.

### **Excerpt 5**

Teacher 1: It's [DWS feedback] still too negative. And I don't know if you can really change that too much, but if it's just every category they've got to throw in one generically positive thing, for example, "You wrote a nice essay. However . . . , do this and do that" [give specific directions how to improve the essay]. Or something like, "You show a clear understanding of this topic, but you need to do more of this and that . . . "

Teacher 2: For high school students, "strong," "adequate," "developing competency," and "inadequate" [categories used for overall evaluations] carry connotations that shut off the necessary channels of communication. Many of my writers were limited in their willingness to read the feedback, simply because of the terminology. I acknowledge the [university] readers need to be "real" in their assessments of students' writing, but it is important to keep the intended audience in mind. These kids are still emerging as writers.

Students saw essay feedback primarily as providing additional information about the strengths and weaknesses of their writing. The most interesting and important feature of DWS feedback was the overall evaluations. Many students turned immediately to the overall evaluations when feedback was returned to schools. Students were enthusiastic and interested in what university-level readers wrote about their essays. While most students found the evaluations accurate reflections of their writing capabilities, some students were disappointed in their overall performance evaluation. This finding was more prevalent for stronger writers who responded to the Subject A prompt. This may be due to the fact that many students responded to the Subject A prompt in a significantly reduced time

frame. Table 5 displays students' ratings of various elements of DWS feedback. Although students' overall ratings on individual items of their perceptions of DWS were not high, students rated feedback from college-level professors as the most important element of DWS feedback.

Students responded to questions about essay feedback in less positive ways than did their teachers. While teachers were generally satisfied with the feedback, students were only modestly enthusiastic in their responses to questions about the information DWS provided about their writing capabilities (Table 5). Teachers reported that students appeared to value the feedback provided about their essays, but were sometimes frustrated by difficult terminology and/or a perceived lack of consistency in the ratings. One teacher, who used the Subject A prompt with some of her English classes and the EPT prompt with other classes, made these observations about DWS feedback:

Table 5  
DWS Feedback to Students (EPT  $n = 287$ ; Subject A  $n = 457$ )

Student ratings of DWS feedback	EPT <sup>a</sup> Mean (SD)	Subject A <sup>a</sup> Mean (SD)
<i>Please CIRCLE one rating for each statement:</i>		
Feedback on my DWS essay was returned soon enough to be useful.	2.7 (0.8)	2.8 (0.7)
Most of the language in the DWS feedback was easy to understand.	3.0 (0.7)	3.1 (0.6)
The DWS feedback gave me new information about strengths and weaknesses in my writing.	3.0 (0.8)	2.9 (0.8)
Feedback from the DWS gave me new information about how prepared I am for college-level writing.	2.9 (0.8)	2.9 (0.8)
I received more positive feedback on some aspects of my essay than I expected.	2.4 (0.9)	2.3 (0.9)
I received more negative feedback on some aspects of my essay than I expected.	2.6 (0.9)	2.6 (0.8)
It was useful to have the full list of diagnostic statements.	3.0 (0.6)	3.0 (0.7)
It was important to me that the DWS feedback came from college professors rather than other teachers or adults.	3.2 (0.8)	3.2 (0.7)

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly agree, NA = Not applicable. Scores were inverted for ease of interpretation.

<sup>a</sup> No statistically significant difference between scores at the  $p > 0.5$  level.

### **Excerpt 6**

My two areas of greatest concern are with the diagnostic comments and the consistency of feedback. Comments at the end are not as useful as those connect[ed] with a particular word, sentence, or passage. Further, the comments were best at identifying problems, rather than offering solutions, or methods for improvement. Reading behind those who evaluated, I noted inconsistency most often between “adequate” and “developing competence.” I sense that readers did not remain “normed” to the anchor papers.

**Usefulness of overall evaluations and diagnostic messages.** Overall, teachers viewed the diagnostic statements as providing helpful information about their students’ writing. For both the Subject A and the EPT prompts, teachers found the diagnostic categories of (a) response to topic, (b) organization, and (c) development [of ideas] to provide the most information about how to improve students’ writing. As would be anticipated, teachers viewed the overall evaluation as less helpful for suggesting how to improve students’ writing competencies (overall evaluations provide holistic ratings of students’ writing competencies). Teachers rated the utility of the Subject A and EPT feedback similarly but tended to be more positive about the Subject A categories, particularly with regard to facility with word choice and sentence structure, grammar, usage and mechanics and the overall evaluation (Table 6). In a limited number of cases, students did not receive complete feedback from readers. Students reported frustration when their essays were missing either overall evaluations or diagnostic feedback.

**DWS alignment with writing assessments used at schools.** Teachers viewed the diagnostic feedback and overall evaluations as consistent with many of the rubrics used in their classrooms. Most teachers commented that they typically employed either a holistic score (similar to the overall evaluation) or a more detailed diagnostic approach (similar to the feedback) when evaluating students’ written work, but not both rubrics. A small number of teachers reported that their classroom rubrics represented even more rigorous standards for writing, and/or addressed more sophisticated aspects of writing than were employed by the DWS standards. In general, the way(s) in which teachers evaluated student work were similar in many

Table 6

## Usefulness of DWS Diagnostic Categories

Subject A (n = 24)	Mean (SD)	English Placement Test (EPT) (n = 12)	Mean (SD)
<i>Please rate how useful the following diagnostic categories were in helping you and your students think about and improve their writing:</i>		<i>Please rate how useful the following diagnostic categories were in helping you and your students think about and improve their writing:</i>	
Response to the Topic	3.3 (0.6)	Response to the Topic	3.3 (0.8)
Organization	3.4 (0.7)	Organization	3.3 (0.8)
Development of Ideas	3.5 (0.7)	Development	3.3 (0.8)
Facility With Word Choice and Sentence Structure	3.2 (0.8)	Sentence Control and Diction	2.8 (0.9)
Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics	3.0 (0.8)	Grammar, Usage, and Diction	2.8 (1.0)
Overall Evaluation	3.0 (0.9)	Overall Evaluation	2.8 (1.0)

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Not at all useful, 2 = Slightly useful, 3 = Somewhat useful, 4 = Very useful, NA = Not applicable. (The scale survey was inverted and the scores were recoded for ease of interpretation.)

ways to the diagnostic statements and overall evaluations developed by DWS. The degree of alignment between teachers' classroom rubrics and the DWS overall evaluations and diagnostic comments is encouraging; however, the results are not surprising given that many of the DWS teachers who volunteer for a project like DWS are the same teachers who read and evaluate Advanced Placement English and Subject A exams.

### DWS Impact on Teaching and Learning

**Use of DWS resources.** DWS provided a wide variety of materials to teachers and students. These included scoring rubrics (overall evaluations and diagnostic feedback), past essay responses and corresponding evaluations for both the Subject A Exam and the EPT, and prompts. Teachers and students made use of the materials based on their understandings of the goals of DWS and their overall purpose in using the service. Table 7 shows teacher ratings of the usefulness of DWS materials.

Table 7  
Usefulness of DWS Materials (n = 24)

Usefulness of the DWS materials	Mean (SD)
<i>Please rate how useful the following were in helping you think about and improve your students' writing:</i>	
Sample questions, essays, and feedback that were available <b>before</b> students wrote essays	3.2 (0.7)
Diagnostic statements on strengths and weaknesses in students' DWS essays	3.3 (0.9)
Overall evaluative comments about students' writing	3.1 (0.9)
Sample essays with feedback and overall evaluations for essay questions to which students had responded	3.1 (0.9)
Class summaries of my students' writing performance (On-line only)	2.7 (1.0)

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Not at all useful, 2 = Slightly useful, 3 = Somewhat useful, 4 = Very useful, NA = Not applicable. (The scale survey was inverted and the scores were recoded for ease of interpretation.)

Teachers' reactions to the DWS materials were generally positive; on-line summaries were rated as least helpful to teachers, perhaps because many teachers had yet to access the summary information at the time of the survey. Interview responses further support teachers' positive reaction to DWS materials. Many teachers plan to use the evaluation comments and diagnostic statements in student portfolios in the coming year. The majority of teachers interviewed requested that DWS materials be distributed earlier in the school year to allow for a fuller and more complete use and implementation of the writing service. Particular uses for specific resources are discussed below.

**1. Essay prompts.** All teachers and students made use of the DWS writing prompts. As noted previously, in the majority of cases, teachers decided which students would respond to which prompt. In general, stronger writers and students who were more likely to attend four-year colleges responded to the Subject A prompt. Less skilled writers responded to the EPT prompt.

**2. Subject A.** Teachers and students struggled with certain aspects of the Subject A prompt. The Subject A prompt asks students to read a 700- to 1000-word nonfiction passage and then respond to that reading selection. Many high school

English courses focus primarily on literary analysis. Lack of experience and lack of exposure to other writing genres created some difficulty and confusion for students in how to effectively answer the prompt. Additionally, time was an issue for many students when responding to the Subject A prompt; as mentioned, the Subject A time frame allows 2 hours for completion of the task. Most high schools have class periods that are 50 minutes in length, creating a serious time constraint for students answering the Subject A prompt.

**3. EPT.** In general, students were comfortable responding to the EPT prompt. The time frame for writing the EPT essay (50 minutes) fits easily into the more traditional high school schedule of 50-minute classes. Teachers reported that students understood the EPT prompt but that they were often unsure about how to write a response in ways that adequately addressed the prompt.

**4. Sample essays.** A limited number of teachers used essay samples prior to using DWS. Some of the schools with on-line access were not aware of the existence of the sample essays, and thus did not use them or require students to read them. The majority of teachers at schools where essays were submitted on paper distributed samples of the essays prior to students' writing DWS essays.

**5. Rubrics.** Teachers used the scoring rubrics in a variety of ways. At some schools, both the overall evaluation and the more specific diagnostic comments were distributed to students before essays were submitted; students were expected to read the information independently. In other situations, class discussions focused on the information presented in the rubrics. As previously noted, many teachers reported that they plan to use both rubrics (overall evaluation and the diagnostic feedback) for instructional purposes in the future.

**Classroom uses of DWS.** Figure 1 displays the various types of activities that teachers and students engaged in prior to writing the essays. A general review of the essay topic was the most prevalent instructional activity; some classes also reviewed the DWS sample essays and the feedback given for them. Teachers commented during interviews that in many cases, time constraints due to end-of-year commitments limited the quantity and quality of prewriting work they were able to do with their DWS classes.



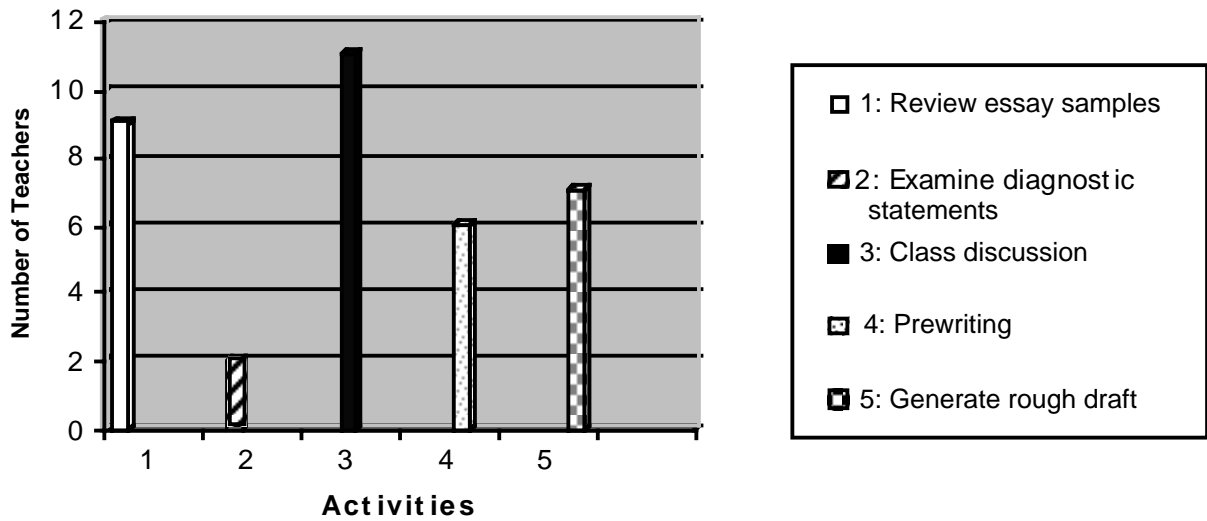


Figure 1. Classroom activities teachers engaged in using DWS materials.

The following comments are representative of the ways in which teachers used DWS materials in their classrooms in preparation for essay writing and once feedback was returned to students. Teacher 1 used both prompts with AP English classes; teacher 2 used the Subject A prompt in an honors English class and a composition class.

**Excerpt 7**

Teacher 1: I had them do homework the night before around the prompt. I had them get in groups—let’s just take the EPT—I had them get into groups; I had them talk about it and get examples from each other. Then, I took them out of the groups and I put on the board how it (the essay) might be outlined. I assisted a lot with how it could be done.

Teacher 2: When the feedback was returned, and I want to mention that it didn’t all come back in one big bunch, I printed up copies of students’ essays, distributed them to students. I gave them time to read over their feedback and then we broke into small groups. I wanted them to see the range of other comments and

essays. We did a great deal of work reading essays from our class, and trying to pinpoint where specific comments related. . . . Students revised their work according to peer review. I also had them “diagnose” their own writing.

**Curricular and instructional changes based on DWS.** Teachers were enthusiastic about the ways in which DWS materials and feedback could be connected to curriculum and instruction. Teachers indicated a wide range of instructional and curricular changes they planned for the future based on their involvement with DWS. These changes include (a) the introduction of brief prewriting exercises, (b) more grammar instruction, (c) additional emphasis on organization and support for argument, (d) more practice with timed writings, (e) specific instruction on learning to use text as a source in essay writing, and (f) additional practice writing essays in response to nonfiction. Open-ended questions and interviews further suggested that teachers welcomed the opportunity to incorporate DWS tools and conceptual structures into their instruction and curriculum to further support and strengthen their students’ writing proficiencies.

**DWS influence on expectations for students’ future education.** Given the relatively short time frame (for most schools) in which students and teachers were involved with DWS during the spring 1999 pilot, it seems unlikely that DWS would have a significant impact on teacher and student expectations for students’ future education. However, nearly half of the teachers indicated that after using DWS, some students began thinking about college entrance requirements, placement tests or the college admissions process. Teachers reported less of an effect for DWS on encouraging students to consider college who previously had not expressed an interest in continuing their formal education. Approximately one third of teachers indicated that DWS increased students’ interest in pursuing higher education.

Students also reported DWS influence on their ideas and expectations for further education; slightly less than 30% of the 744 students surveyed indicated a change in long-range plans for education.

**Value of DWS to teachers and students.** Students and teachers alike valued their experience with DWS. For students, project value came most specifically from

having outside, nonbiased readers provide feedback about their writing competencies. Students also found value in having specific, detailed information about ways in which they could improve their writing and literacy skills.

Teachers understood the value of DWS along a number of dimensions. The importance of outside feedback was strong, but for a slightly different reason than for students. Many teachers reported that the outside audience provided validation of their own teaching and curriculum. Teachers also valued the opportunity to collaborate with university-level instructors and begin a dialogue around the importance of improving literacy competencies for all students (see Excerpt 8).

### **Excerpt 8**

The greatest thing about this project is the beginnings of a dialogue between high school teachers and university-level people. I really believe that by dialoguing about what we are doing and [by] understanding what the universities expect students to be able to do, we're really starting something important. I think another part of this whole process involves getting university people to articulate their expectations. Sure [the expectation] it's in their heads. But having to explain it, to put it out there, really helps us all to feel a part of the bigger process of teaching students to write and write well.

### **DWS Use With ELL and AVID Students**

Of particular interest to UCOP and UCOPE during the second DWS pilot was the efficacy of DWS in ELL and AVID classrooms. No survey data were available in response to this issue (see Appendix A for a copy of the teacher survey). CSE interview data from a subsample of DWS teachers provided insight into the project's impact on ELL and AVID students.

Of the 12 DWS teachers interviewed by CSE, only one class involved AVID students, and those students used DWS in a distinct classroom (from the teacher interviewed). The DWS teacher reported that she used DWS materials and feedback in all her classes. No specific changes were made in instructional techniques or use of DWS to support the development of AVID students' writing competencies.

Rather, the teacher believed that all students, regardless of their language background, could benefit from working with DWS materials.

Interestingly, by the time many ELL students reach high school, they have been redesignated as FEP (Fully English Proficient). Additionally, many schools do not maintain or record language proficiency status and/or home language information in students' cumulative records. Thus, it was difficult in many cases for teachers to discern writing issues particular to ELL students, based on limited home language information. A teacher at a large urban high school commented about using DWS with her ELL students:

### **Excerpt 9**

By the time students get to my class (an honors English course) they are already proficient writers. Sure, you notice for some students the lack of article agreement, or the addition of extra words. But my approach to teaching those students isn't really different than it is with the rest of my class. Also, I figure the readers are savvy enough to recognize writing features that are particular to ELL students, surface level stuff, like article agreement or . . . There is a feedback section that deals specifically with those kind of issues. But what I'm most concerned about for all my students is good thinking and good organization.

### **Reader Perceptions of DWS**

The readers who participated in the spring 1999 DWS pilot were a group of veteran university instructors with experience working with high school teachers and reading and scoring papers for various statewide writing projects. Surveys were returned from 6 of the 12 total university readers. On average, readers scored 85 papers; the total number of essays scored by individual readers ranged from 65 to 100.

**Reader reaction to DWS involvement.** An integral component of DWS is its connection to experienced university writing instructors who teach writing courses and are cognizant of and informed about college-level writing requirements. DWS readers met these criteria; thus, it was particularly important to examine their

responses about DWS. As displayed in Table 8, the majority of readers clearly understood the goal and purpose of evaluating students' writing, found the diagnostic statements and overall evaluations to be appropriate for most students, and reported that the connection between the diagnostic statements and the overall evaluations was clear. However, readers used only a portion of the diagnostic statements when rating student essays and gained limited insight into the nature and quality of high school students' writing, perhaps because many readers are already well informed and familiar with high school students' written work.

Readers indicated that reliability among raters was a challenge to achieve. This observation may be tied to the fact that readers met once to calibrate papers in April 1999, but scored the remaining papers alone. Approximately 12% of essays submitted on paper were "back read" or double scored, and slightly more than 13%

Table 8

Reader Reaction to DWS Involvement ( $n = 6$ )

Readers' comments	Mean (SD)
<i>Please CIRCLE one rating for each statement:</i>	
I used the full range of diagnostic statements when rating essays.	2.5 (0.8)
The diagnostic statements and overall evaluation comments were appropriate for all levels of students.	3.2 (0.7)
The scoring process was easy and efficient.	2.8 (1.2)
Reading student essays helped me to better understand the nature and quality of the writing of high school students.	2.8 (1.4)
There is a clear connection between the diagnostic statements and the overall evaluation rating.	3.3 (1.4)
The writing prompts used for DWS are consistent with the types of writing assignments I require of college-level students.	2.2 (1.2)
Reliability among raters was easy to achieve because we have the same general understandings of what represents good writing at the University level	2.2 (1.3)
The diagnostic statements provide useful and appropriate information to teachers and students about the quality of students' writing.	2.6 (1.2)
The purpose(s) of essay reading and evaluation were clear and understandable.	3.1 (1.0)

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 3 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree, NA = Not applicable.

of all on-line essay submissions were double scored. In instances where differences existed between two readers' scores for the same essay, the second reader's score was the number reported to students. Most readers also reported that DWS's overall evaluations and diagnostic feedback accurately reflected standards for university writing. They commented about the evaluation dimensions and diagnostic feedback categories.

### **Excerpt 10**

*Survey question: To what extent do DWS diagnostic comments and overall evaluations accurately reflect standards for university writing?*

Reader 1: I'd say they reflect and clarify those standards for Subject A. The focus on personal response in the prompt, however, is not a true reflection of academic discourse.

Reader 2: In general, they express them [expectations for university writing] quite well. As I've mentioned, my only concern is some occasional ambiguity. As others feel, I too am uncomfortable with the designation "inadequate writing." It feels too much like "inadequate person."

Reader 4: Reflect standards well.

**Scoring process.** Readers described the scoring process as "rewarding, time-consuming and arduous." Most readers scored papers in both submission formats, paper and on-line. Readers calculated that they spent approximately 10-15 minutes scoring each essay. Readers generally preferred scoring the essays on-line, although there were certain features of the paper format they viewed as superior to the on-line versions. They commented about their experience reading essays on paper and on-line:

### **Excerpt 11**

*Survey question: What differences, if any, existed between reading and rating essays on the computer and reading and rating essays written by hand?*

Reader 1: Computer scoring, with practice, is faster. Less shuffling.

Reader 2: The handwritten essays allowed for an easier return to an earlier section of the essay. The computer-generated essay contained more typos, more surface sloppiness that interfered with a reader's comprehension.

Reader 3: I found the reading and rating on the computer MUCH EASIER [caps in original].

**Future involvement with DWS.** Of the six readers who completed surveys, four were willing to continue their involvement with DWS. These readers speculated about the level of commitment required for future involvement. Specifically, readers were concerned about the level of commitment that would be required in terms of time and total number of essays they would be required to read.

### **Conclusions**

Results presented in this evaluation indicate that overall, the spring 1999 pilot of DWS was successful along a number of dimensions. The number of participating schools was expanded from 6 to 22, the on-line platform was revised and made more user-friendly, and teachers and students alike valued the opportunity of having university-level readers provide diagnostic feedback about their writing competencies. The diagnostic feedback and overall evaluations were further refined; teachers received important information about their students' writing proficiencies, and specific directions about how to connect this diagnostic information to teachers' writing curriculum were generated.

A number of issues remain, however. Many questions about how to best and most effectively plan for the next version of DWS remain unanswered. What is the ultimate purpose of DWS—assessment tool or instructional tool? In what ways can DWS connect feedback more easily with classroom practices? What can be done to equalize access to technology so that all students and teachers have the opportunity to access information about DWS on-line, in a timely and cohesive manner? Can DWS be used more effectively in classes with “weaker” writers? What additional refinements are necessary to make DWS feedback more comprehensible and usable to students and teachers? The recommendation section below represents the first step in exploring the answers to these questions.

## Recommendations

These recommendations are ideas gathered from students, teachers and readers on how to revise and expand the current DWS to increase the effectiveness of the service. They are organized according to the results reported in the previous sections.

### Use With Intended Student Populations

- **Selection process for project participation and class descriptions**

At most school sites, teachers selected the classes and the students who participated in the project. A wide range of classes participated in DWS; classes included Advanced Placement, honors, advanced English, AVID, ELL, composition and “regular” English.

**Recommendation:** Continue to encourage schools and teachers to make DWS available to *all* students, not only those in Advanced Placement, honors or advanced English classes or those considered to be pursuing the “academic track.”

- **Range of student abilities represented**

The majority of students who responded to the Subject A prompt were considered to be “stronger writers” by their teachers. EPT was used in classes where teachers viewed their students as relatively weaker writers. In some cases, however, teachers gave the Subject A prompt to students in their “regular” English classes. English language learners (ELLs) were nested within all types of classes.

**Recommendation:** Continue to encourage teachers to use DWS with all students. Emphasize the diagnostic features of DWS to support and ensure the development of literacy skills for *all* students.

### DWS Usability

- **Purpose in using DWS**

Teachers varied in their purposes in using DWS. Approximately one third of teachers saw the DWS as a chance for the 11th-grade students to have



practice taking a timed test; another third saw the primary purpose of DWS as providing students with access to a nonbiased, expert reader who would provide a realistic assessment of a student's writing abilities. The remaining teachers viewed DWS primarily as an instructional tool to improve their students' writing skills, with the additional advantages of "test practice" and outside readers. The majority of students viewed DWS primarily as an opportunity to have their writing skills assessed by experts.

**Recommendation:** Continue to further refine the nature and purpose of DWS. Make those elements clear to all teachers and students, while simultaneously maintaining flexibility in use and administration.

- **Administration conditions**

The ways in which teachers administered the writing prompts were tied to teachers' purposes in participating in DWS. At some schools, students responded to writing prompts "cold," that is, without reading the prompts in advance or previewing the rubrics or essay samples. In other cases, students engaged in a variety of activities in preparation for responding to a prompt, including reviewing the sample essays and feedback, discussing the diagnostic statements, discussing the prompts in class and other prewriting tasks.

**Recommendation:** Continue to allow teachers flexibility in administration of DWS. However, note that it is likely that differing task conditions have an impact on students' writing performance. Essays written "cold" within a reduced time frame are likely to be of lesser quality, giving students the impression that their writing is weak or inadequate. With more time and opportunity to engage in a more thorough writing process, students' results may improve. It is thus important to indicate the conditions under which essays were written, and to perhaps acknowledge the limited time constraints in the feedback provided to those students. (E.g., "We know you had only limited time to complete your essay and with more time you might have strengthened your work in some of the areas noted below . . ."). Questions remain about how best to accomplish this task.

- **Ease of delivery system use**

Students and teachers alike found the on-line delivery system easy to use, reliable and easy to maneuver. Changes made to the on-line screens were well received and allowed students and teachers greater flexibility in submitting essays on-line. A small number of schools experienced difficulties with ineffective access codes or insufficient codes being provided to schools for the number of students writing essays. Many teachers have limited access to technology, however, which seriously constrains their ability to access on-line information, such as class summaries.

**Recommendation:** Provide additional access codes to each school. Provide additional direction and support for teachers regarding the process involved with submitting essays electronically. Consider supplementing technology resources at schools with limited budgets and/or access to technology.

- **Similarities and differences in paper and computer-based platforms**

In general, teachers and students found the process of submitting essays to be similar regardless of the platform (paper or computer-based). However, it does appear that the turn-around time for feedback was shorter for the on-line group. Teachers found it easier to have students review their feedback when the responses were returned quickly. Additionally, class summaries were provided only to teachers whose students submitted essays on-line. Some teachers were interested in comparing the scores their students received to other, similar schools.

**Recommendation:** Work to provide the same turn-around time for paper and computer submission. Generate whole-class summaries for both paper and computer-based versions. Consider posting scores anonymously on a DWS Web page.

## **Comprehensibility and Utility of DWS Feedback**

- **Value, importance, and comprehensibility of feedback to teachers and students**

The overall essay evaluation was highly valued by students. Students reacted strongly to their overall evaluations; some students were disappointed in their results. Teachers found the diagnostic statements more informative and applicable to instruction than the overall evaluations. Teachers saw the feedback as confirming their classroom assessments of students' writing. The diagnostic statements in general were comprehensible to teachers. However, teachers commented frequently that the feedback required significant explanation on their part. In addition, use of vocabulary such as the word "apt" instead of "likely" made comments more difficult for many students to understand.

**Recommendation:** Continue to refine the diagnostic statements to make them more comprehensible and usable to students. Explore the possibility of including one positive statement with each diagnostic statement. Provide a general letter of explanation to students about the purpose of DWS, their scores and how to accurately interpret them.

- **Usefulness of overall evaluations and diagnostic messages**

Teachers rated the overall evaluations and diagnostic statements as helpful in providing information about students' writing. Most essays received overall evaluations and accompanying diagnostic messages. In a limited number of cases, one or the other was missing. Students and teachers alike were unanimous in voicing their desire to have complete diagnostic information returned on each essay.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that all essays receive complete feedback.

- **Feedback system/rubric consistency with writing assessments required or used at the school**

Teachers reported that the diagnostic feedback and the overall evaluations were generally reflective of the standards they use to assess student work.

Additionally, teachers commented that they plan to incorporate many of the specific features of both the diagnostic feedback and the overall evaluations into their classroom writing assessments.

**Recommendation:** A number of teachers at schools where essays were submitted on-line requested unmarked, correctly formatted copies of the overall evaluations and the diagnostic feedback for use in their classrooms. Make unmarked, correctly formatted copies of the overall evaluations and diagnostic feedback available to teachers at schools where essays were submitted on-line and on paper.

### **DWS Impact on Teaching and Learning**

- **DWS resources used with students**

Time constraints limited the full use of all the materials provided by DWS. All teachers used the prompts; most used the diagnostic comments and overall evaluations, either prior to students writing essays or after feedback was returned to students.

**Recommendation:** Distribute DWS materials early in the year so that teachers have time to review materials and incorporate them into their teaching and curriculum. Make DWS available at two times during the school year, once in the fall and once in the spring. Consider staggering essay submissions to allow readers time to provide feedback in a timely manner. Develop a calendar of DWS “events” so that schools and teachers can plan their schedules and curriculum accordingly.

- **Classroom uses of DWS**

Teachers reported that they used the overall evaluations and specific diagnostic feedback during instruction. In some classes, students revised their essays based on DWS feedback. In other classrooms, whole-class discussions accompanied work with DWS materials. Thus, teachers used various pieces of DWS in various ways, but could use assistance in finding the best ways to incorporate the resources effectively into their classroom curriculum.

In general, students reacted more positively to the EPT prompt. The format of Subject A (with a 2-hour time frame in which to read and respond) may have contributed to students' reaction to the prompts. Additionally, teachers and students noticed more consistency in the overall evaluations and more specific and direct comments about their essays in the diagnostic feedback.

**Recommendation:** Teachers are interested in exploring new ways to strengthen their curriculum and instruction. A teacher Web page could serve to support the communication of important ideas between teachers and university readers. Consider adjusting the time format for Subject A or allow students to write essays on multiple days. Continue to refine the overall evaluation and diagnostic comments for both Subject A and EPT. Perhaps the same scoring rubric could be used for both exams.

- **Curricular and instructional changes based on DWS**

Teachers indicated they planned a wide range of changes for the future based on their involvement with DWS. These included brief prewriting exercises, more grammar instruction, more emphasis on organization and support, more practice with timed writings, learning to use text as a source in essay writing, and more practice writing essays in response to nonfiction.

**Recommendation:** A Web site, with opportunities for teachers to share ideas can further strengthen this component of DWS.

- **DWS influence on teachers' expectations for students or students' expectations for future education**

Approximately half of the DWS teachers surveyed indicated a change in their students' level of interest in college entrance requirements, placement tests and the college admission process. Less than 30% of the students surveyed reported a change in their long-range plans for their education.

**Recommendation:** Continue to support and encourage teachers to use DWS with *all* of their students, to support the DWS's efforts to improve literacy of all students.

## Reader Perceptions of DWS

- **Reader reaction to DWS involvement**

Readers were modestly positive and enthusiastic about their involvement with DWS.

**Recommendation:** Readers are an integral part of the DWS process. Careful thought and consideration are necessary to ensure that readers can continue their involvement with the project. More readers could be trained to participate in the project, perhaps including some of the teachers who have been involved with DWS since its inception.

- **Scoring process**

Readers found the scoring process to be reasonable, although long and arduous at times. Most preferred scoring on-line. Readers commented that after the initial “training period” of learning to use the system, they found on-line scoring to be faster and more convenient. Paper copies offered ease of return to review previous work. Suggested one reader: “[I suggest that you . . . ] Redesign the on-line scoring sheet to prevent mistakes. Scoring arrangements like this: 01020304, etc., are potentially confusing.”

**Recommendation:** Continue to revise the on-line scoring form to facilitate accurate and timely data entry.

- **Future involvement with DWS**

Four of the six readers who returned surveys are willing to continue their involvement with DWS.

**Recommendation:** Support and encourage readers to continue their involvement with the project.

## Additional Reader Recommendations

1. Perhaps include a couple of “feel-good” descriptors to temper the negativity of the feedback to the weakest students. Add a descriptor for spelling.
2. Add an indicator in organization for lack of paragraphs. Some students write without paragraphs at all.

3. Add the word “thesis” and a few references to development of an argument. There are many references to the students’ “ideas.” Many professors will expect students to be able to articulate some thesis (you could even refer to it as a “thesis idea”) and develop that thesis in a clearly organized way.

### **Logistical Considerations for DWS**

**Contact information: Head teacher.** During both the fall 1998 prototype and the spring 1999 pilot, one teacher was selected at each school to serve as the primary DWS contact person. This person was responsible for relaying information to other DWS participants at the school. The notion of a lead teacher is a viable one because of the importance and necessity of having one person responsible for distributing information and “leading the band.” From an administrative perspective, however, it is also very important to have contact information for all teachers who are involved with the project. Teachers who chose to participate in the project could then provide important contact information to DWS personnel. Many teachers do not have access to computers or e-mail capabilities at their schools, but do have access at home or off-site. Receiving information about the project and its goals in a timely and accessible fashion may serve to increase teachers’ willingness to participate in the project. Contact with individual teachers would help to streamline many processes and allow for expedient response to questions and concerns about technical aspects of DWS, and may facilitate a greater sense of collaboration between participants and project organizers.

### **Reliability and Validity Issues**

Reliability and validity data are necessary to support the use of scores. It is important to find a way to get these data easily and reliably. A number of teachers commented on the variance of scores (between EPT and Subject A) and raised questions about readers’ adherence to the rubric. Future versions of DWS may want to consider the efficiency and quality of the scoring process. Specifically, a certain percentage of student essays could be double scored (both on-line and paper essays) to establish reliability of readers and scores. Additionally, it is important to score a

percentage of on-line papers by “paper readers” and vice versa to ensure that scores do not differ based on submission format (on-line or paper).

### **Next Steps for DWS**

The evaluation of the spring 1999 DWS pilot is intended to provide information about the value of DWS to teachers and students and suggestions for refining its features for future use and wider implementation. Careful consideration of the issues and recommendations in the previous section will serve to strengthen the project for the next version of DWS and its successful implementation.



## References

Storms, B., & Sheingold, K. (1999, February). *Teachers' and students' use of and reactions to the DWS prototype* (Internal report). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

## Appendix A

### TEACHER SURVEY ON THE DIAGNOSTIC WRITING SERVICE (DWS)

How many of your classes used the Diagnostic Writing Service (DWS)? \_\_\_\_\_ For **each** of your classes that used the DWS, please provide the Following information:

Class period	Grade level	Approximate number of students	Type of essay question used	Student population
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 9th <input type="checkbox"/> 10th <input type="checkbox"/> 11th <input type="checkbox"/> 12th	# students in class: _____  # that used DWS: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> English Placement Test <input type="checkbox"/> Subject A <input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> heterogeneous <input type="checkbox"/> honors <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Placement <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 9th <input type="checkbox"/> 10th <input type="checkbox"/> 11th <input type="checkbox"/> 12th	# students in class: _____  # that used DWS: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> English Placement Test <input type="checkbox"/> Subject A <input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> heterogeneous <input type="checkbox"/> honors <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Placement <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 9th <input type="checkbox"/> 10th <input type="checkbox"/> 11th <input type="checkbox"/> 12th	# students in class: _____  # that used DWS: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> English Placement Test <input type="checkbox"/> Subject A <input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> heterogeneous <input type="checkbox"/> honors <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Placement <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> 9th <input type="checkbox"/> 10th <input type="checkbox"/> 11th <input type="checkbox"/> 12th	# students in class: _____  # that used DWS: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> English Placement Test <input type="checkbox"/> Subject A <input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> heterogeneous <input type="checkbox"/> honors <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Placement <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

1. Who decided which classes or students would use the DWS? Check ALL that apply.

- I did
- My students
- Department
- Administrator(s)

2. How did your students write and submit their essays? Check ALL that apply.

- Written on computer
- Written by hand, then keyed into computer
- Written on word processor, then pasted into DWS submit screen
- Written directly on DWS submit screen
- Written by hand and sent through mail

#### USE OF THE DIAGNOSTIC WRITING SERVICE

<p>3. What was the <b>primary</b> reason these students were selected to use the DWS? Check only ONE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students most likely to consider college</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling convenience, e.g., when computers available, or only classes I taught</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To provide opportunity for all students</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____</li> </ul>	<p>4. Approximately how much time did your students have to write their DWS essays? Check only ONE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One class period (approximately _____ minutes)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two class periods (approximately _____ minutes)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More than two class periods or two hours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can't tell, administered under untimed conditions or as homework</li> </ul>
<p>5. What classroom activities, if any, did your students do <b>before</b> they wrote their DWS essays? Check ALL that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed DWS sample essays and feedback</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Looked at the list of diagnostic statements on-line</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talked about topics in class</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Worked on outlines or other prewriting steps</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wrote rough draft and got feedback</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____</li> </ul>	<p>6. How much Internet access do your students have? Check only ONE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enough computers with Internet connection in my classroom or school for each student to access DWS</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One or more computers with Internet connection in my classroom or school but not enough for each student to access DWS</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No computers with Internet connection in school</li> </ul>

Please **CIRCLE** a number to rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

<b>EASE OF USE</b>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
7. Scheduling conflicts limited our use of the DWS (e.g., fixed length class periods, computer access, student testing program).	1	2	3	4	n/a
8. It was inconvenient to interrupt my usual class activities to use the DWS.	1	2	3	4	n/a
9. (If you used the on-line system) The on-line software was easy for my students to use.	1	2	3	4	n/a
10. (If you used the on-line system) Some of the on-line screens were difficult to navigate.	1	2	3	4	n/a
11. (If you used the on-line system) We could usually get a connection to the DWS Web site.	1	2	3	4	n/a
12. (If you used the on-line system) We were rarely disconnected from the DWS Web site while using it.	1	2	3	4	n/a

<b>USEFULNESS OF THE DWS MATERIALS</b>	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Slightly useful	Not at all useful	Not applicable
Please rate how useful the following were in helping you think about and improve your students' writing:					
13a. Sample questions, essays, and feedback that was available <b>before</b> students wrote essays	1	2	3	4	n/a
13b. Diagnostic statements on strengths and weaknesses in students' DWS essays	1	2	3	4	n/a
13c. Overall evaluative comments about students' writing	1	2	3	4	n/a
13d. Sample essays with feedback and overall evaluations for essay questions to which students had responded	1	2	3	4	n/a
13e. (On-line only) Class summaries of my students' writing performance	1	2	3	4	n/a

Please rate how useful the following diagnostic categories were in helping you and your students think about and improve their writing:

<b>SUBJECT A</b>	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Slightly useful	Not at all useful	Not applicable
14a. Response to the Topic	1	2	3	4	n/a
14b. Organization	1	2	3	4	n/a
14c. Development of Ideas	1	2	3	4	n/a
14d. Facility with Word Choice and Sentence Structure	1	2	3	4	n/a
14e. Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics	1	2	3	4	n/a
14f. Overall Evaluation	1	2	3	4	n/a

<b>ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST</b>	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Slightly useful	Not at all useful	Not applicable
14g. Response to the Topic	1	2	3	4	n/a
14h. Development	1	2	3	4	n/a
14i. Organization	1	2	3	4	n/a
14j. Sentence Control and Diction	1	2	3	4	n/a
14k. Grammar, Usage, and Diction	1	2	3	4	n/a
14l. Overall Evaluation	1	2	3	4	n/a

## FEEDBACK

<p>15. What feedback on your students DWS essays did you look at or use? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual feedback on essays my students submitted</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sample essays and feedback for essay questions to which students had <b>responded</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> (On-line users only) Class summaries of my students writing performance</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____</p>	<p>16. To what extent did the DWS feedback agree with your evaluation of your students writing?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The DWS feedback mostly seemed accurate.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The DWS feedback seemed somewhat accurate.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The DWS feedback often seemed inaccurate.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I did not see any feedback.</p>
<p>17. (If you used the on-line system) What did you do with the class summary feedback information that was available on-line? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I didn't know it existed.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I looked at it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I shared results with my students who used the DWS.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I shared results with other teachers who used the DWS.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I shared results with teachers who did not use the DWS.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____</p>	<p>18. What kind of DWS feedback is most useful for guiding improvement in student writing? Check only ONE.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Diagnostic statements on strengths and weaknesses in students essays are more useful.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Overall evaluations of students essays are more useful.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The diagnostic statements and overall evaluations are equally useful.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I did not see any feedback.</p>
<p>19. What feedback on their DWS essays was provided to your students? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> DWS feedback on essays submitted</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sample essays and feedback for essay questions to which students had responded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher feedback or grade</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students received no feedback</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____</p>	<p>20. What did your students do with the feedback they received on their essays? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students read through the feedback individually.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Many students did not look at the feedback.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students talked about the feedback in class.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students talked about sample essays in class.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____</p>
<p>21. What, if any, writing activities did students do related to the feedback they received? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students did no further work on their essays.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students reread their own or one another s essays in light of the feedback.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students revised their essays in light of the feedback.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students worked on other writing assignments to address the feedback.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____</p>	<p>22. How likely is the DWS to help improve your students writing? Check only ONE.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very likely to help improve their writing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat likely to help improve their writing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not likely to help improve their writing</p>
<p>23. What general impact did the feedback have on your <b>STRONGER</b> writers? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Little impact it neither discouraged nor encouraged stronger writers.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Most stronger writers were encouraged (left them thinking they could improve their writing or do college-level work).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some stronger writers were encouraged (left them thinking they could improve their writing or do college-level work).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some stronger writers were discouraged (left them thinking they could not improve their writing or do college-level work).</p>	<p>24. What general impact did the feedback have on your <b>WEAKER</b> writers? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Little impact it neither discouraged nor encouraged weaker writers.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Most weaker writers were encouraged (left them thinking they could improve their writing or do college-level work).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some weaker writers were encouraged (left them thinking they could improve their writing or do college-level work).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Some weaker writers were discouraged (left them thinking they could not improve their writing or do college-level work).</p>

Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
25. Feedback was returned soon enough to be useful.	1	2	3	4	n/a
26. Some of the language in the diagnostic statements was difficult for me to understand.	1	2	3	4	n/a
27. Using the DWS gave me new information about what is expected in college-level writing.	1	2	3	4	n/a
28. DWS feedback gave me new information about the strengths and weaknesses in my students' writing.	1	2	3	4	n/a
29. The DWS gave me new information about which students needed more help with their writing.	1	2	3	4	n/a
30. Feedback from the DWS gave me new information about how prepared my students are for college-level writing.	1	2	3	4	n/a
31. Using the DWS helped me generate new ideas about how to help my students improve their writing.	1	2	3	4	n/a
32. It was important to me that the DWS feedback came from college.	1	2	3	4	n/a
33. It was useful for me to see the full list of diagnostic statements.	1	2	3	4	n/a
34. Students received more positive feedback than I expected.	1	2	3	4	n/a
35. Students received more negative feedback than I expected.	1	2	3	4	n/a
36. It was sometimes hard for the students to see how an overall evaluation related to diagnostic statements about the strengths and weaknesses in their DWS essays.	1	2	3	4	n/a
37. Students were confused when no statements were provided in some of the diagnostic categories.	1	2	3	4	n/a
38. Students were interested in receiving feedback on their essays.	1	2	3	4	n/a
39. My students generally could understand the feedback.	1	2	3	4	n/a
40. The feedback that students received was specific enough to be helpful.	1	2	3	4	n/a
41. Stronger writers were more likely than weaker writers to reread or revise their essays in light of the DWS feedback.	1	2	3	4	n/a
42. After using the DWS, some students began thinking for the first time about college entrance requirements, placement tests, or the college admission process.	1	2	3	4	n/a
43. Results on the DWS essay encouraged some students to consider college who previously had not expressed an interest.	1	2	3	4	n/a
44. Students usually thought the overall evaluations of their essays were consistent with the diagnostic statements from the readers.	1	2	3	4	n/a

**MOTIVATIONS FOR USING DWS IN THE FUTURE**

45. Would you use the DWS again in the future?

yes       no

If yes, please rate how important each of the following would be as a motivation for using the DWS in the future.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important	Not applicable
45a. request by administrator	1	2	3	4	n/a
45b. to inform students about how prepared they are for college writing	1	2	3	4	n/a
45c. to provide students with information about strengths and weaknesses in their writing	1	2	3	4	n/a
45d. to provide students with practice writing college-level essays	1	2	3	4	n/a
45e. to help students improve their writing	1	2	3	4	n/a
45f. to provide me with information that I could use to help the students improve their writing	1	2	3	4	n/a
45g. to provide me with information that I could use to change how or what I teach	1	2	3	4	n/a
45h. to inform me about how prepared my students are for college writing	1	2	3	4	n/a
45i. to provide me with information about what is expected in college-level writing	1	2	3	4	n/a
45j. other (please specify): _____	1	2	3	4	n/a

If you would not want to use the DWS again in the future, please rate the significance of each possible influence on your decision:

46a. cannot spare the class time	1	2	3	4	n/a
46b. feedback did not help my students	1	2	3	4	n/a
46c. feedback was discouraging to my students	1	2	3	4	n/a
46d. feedback was not useful to me	1	2	3	4	n/a
46e. logistical problems, such as scheduling use of computers or finding time to write in class	1	2	3	4	n/a
46f. other (please specify): _____	1	2	3	4	n/a

Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

**GENERAL VIEWS ON DESIGN AND USES OF DWS**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
47. The DWS would be useful for assessing both timed essays and more extended classroom writing activities.	1	2	3	4	n/a
48. The expectations for student writing that were embodied in DWS materials and diagnostic feedback were consistent with what I value in student writing.	1	2	3	4	n/a
49. The DWS is most useful with college-bound or honors students.	1	2	3	4	n/a
50. The DWS should allow students to revise and resubmit essays for additional feedback.	1	2	3	4	n/a
51. The DWS is better for individual student use than for teachers or classroom-level purposes.	1	2	3	4	n/a
52. My future college-bound students will want to use the DWS.	1	2	3	4	n/a
53. In the future, my students who have not previously considered college will want to use the DWS.	1	2	3	4	n/a
54. I would like to have access to other teachers who use the DWS to develop strategies for helping students improve their writing.	1	2	3	4	n/a

55. Based on your DWS experience, what might you emphasize more or less in your writing instruction? (Continue on back as needed.)

56. What is one way that you would recommend changing the DWS so that it better helps you and your students improve their writing? (Continue on back as needed.)

## Appendix B

### STUDENT SURVEY ON THE DIAGNOSTIC WRITING SERVICE (DWS)

<p>1. Grade level:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 9th <input type="checkbox"/> 10th <input type="checkbox"/> 11th <input type="checkbox"/> 12th	<p>2. Type of class:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> regular <input type="checkbox"/> honors <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Placement	<p>3. Type of essay question to which you responded:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> English Placement Test <input type="checkbox"/> Subject A <input type="checkbox"/> both <input type="checkbox"/> neither [STOP HERE IF YOU DID NOT USE THE DWS]
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#### USE OF THE DIAGNOSTIC WRITING SERVICE

<p>4. What classroom activities, if any, did you do <b>before</b> you wrote your Diagnostic Writing Service (DWS) essay? Check ALL that apply.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed sample model essays and feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Looked at the list of diagnostic statements on-line <input type="checkbox"/> Talked about essay topics in class <input type="checkbox"/> Worked on an outline or other activity before writing <input type="checkbox"/> Wrote a rough draft and got feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Wrote final essay without other activities beforehand <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____	<p>5. Was your essay sent using the DWS Web site? Check only ONE.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I sent it on-line myself. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, my teacher or someone else sent it on-line. <input type="checkbox"/> No, we sent our papers through the mail.
<p>6. (If you used the on-line system) How easy was it to connect to the on-line DWS? Check ALL that apply.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> I could usually get connected to the DWS Web site. <input type="checkbox"/> I was often disconnected from the DWS Web site while I was using it. <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I was disconnected from the DWS Web site while I was using it. <input type="checkbox"/> I rarely was disconnected from the DWS Web site.	<p>7. (If you used the on-line system) How easy was it to use the on-line DWS? Check only ONE.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> The on-line screens were always easy to use. <input type="checkbox"/> Some on-line screens were difficult to use. <input type="checkbox"/> Most on-line screens were difficult to use.

#### FEEDBACK FROM THE DIAGNOSTIC WRITING SERVICE

<p>8. What feedback did you get on your DWS essay? Check ALL that apply.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> DWS feedback on the essay I submitted <input type="checkbox"/> Sample essays and feedback for the question to which I had responded <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher comments and/or grade on my DWS essay <input type="checkbox"/> I got no feedback on my DWS essay. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____	<p>9. What did you do after you received DWS feedback on your essay? Check ALL that apply.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> I read through the DWS feedback on my essay. <input type="checkbox"/> I read the sample essays and feedback for the question to which I had responded. <input type="checkbox"/> I looked at the full list of diagnostic statements. <input type="checkbox"/> We talked about our feedback in class. <input type="checkbox"/> We talked about sample essays in class. <input type="checkbox"/> I got but did not look at the feedback. <input type="checkbox"/> I did not get any feedback. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____
<p>10. What kind of DWS feedback was of most interest to you? Check only ONE.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback on strengths and weaknesses in my essay <input type="checkbox"/> Overall evaluation of my writing <input type="checkbox"/> Both the overall evaluation of my writing and feedback on strengths and weaknesses in my essay <input type="checkbox"/> I was not interested in the feedback. <input type="checkbox"/> I did not see any feedback.	<p>11. To what extent did the DWS feedback agree with your own evaluation of your writing?</p> <input type="checkbox"/> The DWS feedback mostly seemed accurate. <input type="checkbox"/> The DWS feedback seemed somewhat accurate. <input type="checkbox"/> The DWS feedback often seemed inaccurate. <input type="checkbox"/> I did not see any feedback.



<p>12. What, if any, writing activities did you do <b>after</b> you got DWS feedback? Check ALL that apply.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I did no further work on my essay.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I reread my essay in light of the feedback.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I revised my essay in light of the feedback.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I applied the feedback to other writing assignments.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)_____</p>	<p>13. How likely is the DWS to help you improve your writing? Check only ONE.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very likely to help me improve my writing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat likely to help me improve my writing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not likely to help me improve my writing</p>
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**RATINGS OF THE DIAGNOSTIC WRITING SERVICE**

Please <b>CIRCLE</b> one rating for each statement:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
14. Feedback on my DWS essay was returned soon enough to be useful.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
15. Most of the language in the DWS feedback was easy to understand.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
16. The DWS feedback gave me new information about strengths and weaknesses in my writing.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
17. Feedback from the DWS gave me new information about how prepared I am for college-level writing.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
18. I received more positive feedback on some aspects of my essay than I expected.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
19. I received more negative feedback on some aspects of my essay than I expected.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
20. It was useful to have the full list of diagnostic statements.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
21. It was important to me that the DWS feedback came from college professors rather than other teachers or adults.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
22. After using the DWS, I began thinking for the first time about college entrance requirements, placement tests, or the college admission process.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
23. Using the DWS gave me new information about what is expected in college-level writing.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
24. I would like to use a system like the DWS to get feedback on other essays.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
25. I would like to be able to revise and resubmit my DWS essay to get more feedback.	SA	A	D	SD	n/a
26. Based on your DWS feedback, what might you do more or less of in your writing?					

## Appendix C

### Diagnostic Writing Service Evaluation Reader Survey, Spring 1999

#### Background Information

1. Gender       Male     Female
2. Ethnicity  
 African-American     Latino/a                       White, non-Latino/a     Other  
 Asian-American       Native-American     Biracial/multiethnic    \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of years teaching at university level    \_\_\_\_\_
4. Type(s) of courses taught  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Additional related teaching experience  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Prior experience working with high school teachers (Please describe)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Prior rating experience (Please describe)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Evaluation Process

8. Please indicate the total number of essays you scored/will score.    \_\_\_\_\_
9. Approximately how much time did you spend scoring each essay  
Paper and pencil \_\_\_\_\_  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_  
Total scoring time \_\_\_\_\_
10. What differences, if any, existed between reading and rating essays on the computer and reading and rating essays written by hand?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Scoring Experience

**Please rate the following aspects of your DWS experience:**

	Strongly Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree
11. I used the full range of diagnostic statements when rating essays.	□	□	□	□	□
12. The diagnostic statements and overall evaluation comments were appropriate for all levels of students.	□	□	□	□	□
13. The scoring process was easy and efficient.	□	□	□	□	□
14. Reading student essays helped me to better understand the nature and quality of the writing of high school students.	□	□	□	□	□
15. There is a clear connection between the diagnostic statements and the overall evaluation rating.	□	□	□	□	□
16. The writing prompts used for DWS are consistent with the types of writing assignments I require of college-level students.	□	□	□	□	□
17. Reliability among raters was easy to achieve because we have the same general understandings of what represents good writing at the university level	□	□	□	□	□
18. I am willing to continue my involvement with the DWS project.	□	□	□	□	□
19. The diagnostic statements provide useful and appropriate information to teachers and students about the quality of students' writing.	□	□	□	□	□
20. The purpose(s) of essay reading and evaluation were clear and understandable.	□	□	□	□	□

Additional comments:

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21. Do the major categories in the diagnostic statements address important issues in writing quality essays? Please explain.

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25. Are there significantly problematic features in the essays written by ESL students that can be easily addressed through the diagnostic statements and overall evaluations? What special issues emerge when reading and evaluating essays obviously written by ESL students?

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Thank you for completing this survey.

## **Appendix D**

### **Teacher Interview Protocol**

#### **Introduce self**

#### **Purpose of this visit and interview**

- The partners, UC, CSU and ETS, who developed the Diagnostic Writing Service (DWS), are interested in your insights after using the DWS.
- I'm here representing ETS to learn about how you used the DWS and its materials and what you and your students found to be meaningful and useful.
- We're interested in both what went right, and what didn't go as well as expected.
- I'll be taking notes throughout my visit and/or audio taping this conversation so that I'm sure I don't miss any important points.

Do you have any questions before I begin?

#### **Consent and honorarium**

Review permission form and have teacher sign it. If a substitute was not used, then remind the teacher about the \$50 honorarium. In order to process the check teachers need to provide a summer mailing address and social security number (see Consent form).

START TAPE HERE

STATE—DATE/LOCATION/TEACHER NAME

#### **BACKGROUND**

Let me get some background information on your use of the DWS.

1. Which of your classes used the DWS?
2. Did the students respond to a CSU English Placement Test (EPT) prompt or to a UC Subject A prompt?
3. Did they use the on-line version of the DWS?
4. What were your primary purposes for using the DWS with this/these class/es?

#### **GENERAL IMPRESSIONS**

5. What, if anything, was useful to you in using the DWS?

##### **PROMPTS**

- What information do you think students got from the DWS about their writing?
- What new information did the DWS give you about your students' writing?
- How, if at all, did your experience with the DWS influence your writing instruction? Did it change your ideas about what to emphasize more or less in your writing instruction? Tell me more.
- What was it about the DWS lead you to believe ...

## DWS STUDENT FEEDBACK

I'd like to ask you some questions about your uses of, reactions to and interpretations of the feedback your students received from the DWS. Note: take list of comments and sample copies of individual student feedback (take both EPT and Subject A; on-line or paper as needed)

### **DWS Repeat Users** (For repeat DWS schools only)

6. Did using the DWS prototype lead you to change your writing instruction?

#### PROMPTS

- What kinds of changes did you make?
- What was it about the DWS that led you to believe these changes were needed?
- (If no) Did you find the DWS useful in any way? Tell me more.

### **TEACHER USE OF STUDENT FEEDBACK HAVE SAMPLE FEEDBACK AVAILABLE**

7. Did you, the teacher, review the DWS feedback for individual students?

#### PROMPTS

- What did you do? (Tell me about the process you used.)
- What were you looking for?
- Of the student feedback you reviewed, was there any information that was especially useful to you as a teacher? Tell me about that information (which information). In what ways was it useful? What does useful mean in terms of your writing instruction? How did you use it or how do you plan to use it? (implications)
- Did you find either the diagnostic comments about strengths and weaknesses in the student's essay or the overall evaluation of the student's readiness for college writing to be especially useful? Tell me more.

8. Did you use the feedback as part of any classroom activities?

#### PROMPTS

- Please describe the activities? What were you hoping this activity would do
- In what ways did the DWS feedback lend itself to and not lend itself to classroom use?

9. (May be most useful to have the list of comments available in answering this question) Were there any specific diagnostic statements or category of diagnostic statements (e.g., "response to the topic," "depth and complexity of thought," etc.) that were more or less useful to you or your students than others? Tell me more.

- Are there other categories related to student writing that you would like the DWS to give feedback on?

10. Are there changes you could suggest in how the feedback to students is presented or written?

11. In what ways could the Diagnostic Writing Service feedback for teachers be improved?

### **(ON-LINE SCHOOLS) USE OF ON-LINE SUMMARY**

12. Have you accessed the on-line class summary information? If not, why not?

13. I'd like to look at the summary for your school/class. with you and have you talk to me about what you find interesting and how you might use that information. (Show summary. )

- What are you noticing?
- What does that tell you about your student's writing? Did you find anything to be surprising or different than you expected?
- Based on what you see here, what might you emphasize more or less in your writing instruction?

### **OVERALL IMPROVEMENT OF DWS**

14. The goal of the DWS is to support improvement of high school student writing. How might the DWS better meet this goal?

### **CLOSING COMMENTS**

- Do you have any other comments about the DWS that you would like me to take back to the developers?

Thank you for your time.



## **Appendix E**

### **Sample English Placement Test (EPT) and Subject A Prompts**

# WELCOME TO THE DIAGNOSTIC WRITING SERVICE

## Introduction

The purpose of the Diagnostic Writing Service is to help you and your teacher improve your writing. To use the Service, you simply write and submit an essay on one of the six topics you will find on the pages following this introduction. Three of these essay questions recently appeared on the California State University English Placement Test. The other three recently appeared on the University of California Subject A Examination. Your teacher may tell you which topic to write on. Or, perhaps, you will be invited to choose a topic yourself.

When you submit your essay, it will go to one of the readers who evaluate actual Subject A or EPT essays written by entering UC or CSU students. Your reader will give you two kinds of feedback:

- (1) a number of specific comments, chosen from a comprehensive list, to help you and your teacher identify your strengths and weaknesses as a writer and
- (2) an "Overall Evaluation" telling you and your teacher whether your writing meets the entry-level standards needed to succeed academically at the UC or the CSU.

Your feedback will be sent back to your school about two to four weeks after you submit your essay.

If you want more information about the Diagnostic Writing Service and how to use it, you can turn to the section of this packet entitled "**Questions and Answers about the DWS.**"

## IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

**Your essay must be written in the essay booklet your teacher will give you. The cover of the booklet lists all the topics. Please put a check mark next to the topic on which you are writing.**

## **EPT Essay Question on Fads and Trends**

**DIRECTIONS:** Plan and write an essay on the topic specified below the directions. **DO NOT WRITE ON A TOPIC OTHER THAN THE ONE SPECIFIED. AN ESSAY ON A TOPIC OF YOUR OWN CHOICE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.**

Because this essay is being assigned to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to write effectively, you should take care to express your thoughts on the topic clearly. Be specific, using supporting examples whenever appropriate. Your essay should be as well organized and as carefully written as you can make it. Remember that how well you write is more important than how much you write. Allow time to review and proofread your essay and to make any revisions or corrections you wish.

If you are simulating actual EPT essay administration conditions, or if you wish to simulate typical in-class writing conditions, you should allot 45-minutes for your planning, writing, and editing.

You will probably find it helpful to spend some time considering the topic and organizing your thoughts before you begin writing. You may make notes on scratch paper if you wish. Remember, however, that you must write your essay in the booklet that you have received from your teacher; only writing that appears in this booklet will be evaluated.

### **ESSAY TOPIC:**

Briefly describe a fad or trend that you dislike. Explain why it has attracted so many followers and why you dislike it. Develop your point of view by giving reasons and/or examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

## **EPT Essay Question on Images of Beauty**

**DIRECTIONS:** Plan and write an essay on the topic specified below the directions. **DO NOT WRITE ON A TOPIC OTHER THAN THE ONE SPECIFIED. AN ESSAY ON A TOPIC OF YOUR OWN CHOICE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.**

Because this essay is being assigned to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to write effectively, you should take care to express your thoughts on the topic clearly. Be specific, using supporting examples whenever appropriate. Your essay should be as well organized and as carefully written as you can make it. Remember that how well you write is more important than how much you write. Allow time to review and proofread your essay and to make any revisions or corrections you wish.

If you are simulating actual EPT essay administration conditions, or if you wish to simulate typical in-class writing conditions, you should allot 45-minutes for your planning, writing, and editing.

You will probably find it helpful to spend some time considering the topic and organizing your thoughts before you begin writing. You may make notes on scratch paper if you wish. Remember, however, that you must write your essay in the booklet that you have received from your teacher; only writing that appears in this booklet will be evaluated.

### **ESSAY TOPIC:**

Images of beauty-both male and female-are promoted in magazines, in movies, on billboards, and on television. Explain the extent to which you think these images can be beneficial or harmful.

## **EPT Essay Question on Breaking Traditions**

**DIRECTIONS:** Plan and write an essay on the topic specified below the directions. **DO NOT WRITE ON A TOPIC OTHER THAN THE ONE SPECIFIED. AN ESSAY ON A TOPIC OF YOUR OWN CHOICE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.**

Because this essay is being assigned to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to write effectively, you should take care to express your thoughts on the topic clearly. Be specific, using supporting examples whenever appropriate. Your essay should be as well organized and as carefully written as you can make it. Remember that how well you write is more important than how much you write. Allow time to review and proofread your essay and to make any revisions or corrections you wish.

If you are simulating actual EPT essay administration conditions, or if you wish to simulate typical in-class writing conditions, you should allot 45-minutes for your planning, writing, and editing.

You will probably find it helpful to spend some time considering the topic and organizing your thoughts before you begin writing. You may make notes on scratch paper if you wish. Remember, however, that you must write your essay in the booklet that you have received from your teacher; only writing that appears in this booklet will be evaluated.

### **ESSAY TOPIC:**

Many adults become upset when young people break with the traditions of the past. Do you think that these adults are justified in reacting this way? Why or why not? Support your position with evidence from your own experience or the experience of people you know.

## **Subject A Essay Question on "Why People Don't Help in a Crisis"**

**DIRECTIONS:** Read carefully the passage and essay topic that follow the directions. Respond to the topic by writing an essay that is controlled by a central idea and is specifically developed. Be sure to review and proofread your essay and to make any revisions or corrections you wish.

Your essay will be evaluated on the basis of your ability to develop your central idea, to express yourself clearly, and to use the conventions of written English. The topic has no "correct" response.

As you read the passage, you may make reading notes on scratch paper. You should also use your scratch paper to plan your essay before you begin writing. Bear in mind that anything you have written on scratch paper will not be seen by the person evaluating your essay. Your actual essay must be written in the booklet you have received from your teacher; only writing that appears in this booklet will be evaluated.

If you are simulating actual Subject A essay administration conditions, you should allot two hours for your planning, writing, and editing.

### **"Why People Don't Help in a Crisis"**

**Introductory Note:** The following passage is adapted from an article published in 1968 by John Darley and Bibb Latané. Darley and Latané, both professors of psychology, collaborated on research about bystanders' responses to emergencies and crimes. Interest in this subject was high during the 1960's as a result of people's surprise and shock at the behavior of witnesses to the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese: after her cries for help awakened them, Genovese's New York City neighbors watched from their apartment windows but did not call police or otherwise aid Genovese during the half hour that she was repeatedly stabbed in a parking lot across the street.

### **WHY PEOPLE DON'T HELP IN A CRISIS**

Andrew Mormille is stabbed as he rides in a New York City subway train. Eleven other riders flee to another car as the 17-year-old boy bleeds to death; not one comes to his assistance, even after his attackers have left the car. He dies. Eleanor Bradley trips and breaks her leg while shopping on New York City's Fifth Avenue. Dazed and in shock, she calls for help, but the hurrying stream of people simply parts and flows past. Finally, after 40 minutes, a taxi driver stops and helps her to a doctor. How can so many people watch another human being in distress and do nothing? Why don't they help?

Since we started research on bystanders' responses to emergencies, we have heard many explanations for the lack of intervention in such cases. All of these explanations share one characteristic: they set witnesses who do not intervene apart from the rest of us and assume they are indifferent to what is happening. But if we look closely at the behavior of these witnesses, they begin to seem less indifferent. The 38 witnesses to the famous murder of Kitty Genovese, for example, did not merely look at the scene once and then ignore it. They continued to stare out of their windows, caught, fascinated, distressed, unwilling to act but unable to turn away.

Why, then, didn't they act? There are three things bystanders must do if they are to intervene in an emergency: notice that something is happening, interpret that event as an emergency, and decide that they have personal responsibility for intervention. The presence of other bystanders may at each stage inhibit action.

People trying to interpret a situation often look at those around them to see how to react. If everyone else is calm and indifferent, they will tend to remain so; if everyone else is reacting strongly, they are likely to do so as well. This tendency is not merely slavish conformity; ordinarily we derive much valuable information about new situations from how others around us behave. It's a rare traveler who, in picking a roadside restaurant, chooses to stop at one where no other cars appear in the parking lot.

Suppose that a man has a heart attack. He clutches his chest, staggers to the nearest building and slumps sitting to the sidewalk. Will a passerby come to his assistance? First, the bystander has to notice that something is happening. He must tear himself away from his private thoughts and pay attention. But Americans consider it bad manners to look closely at other people in public. We are taught to respect the privacy of others, and when among strangers we close our ears and avoid staring. In a crowd, then, each person is less likely to notice a potential emergency than when alone.

Once an event is noticed, an onlooker must decide if it is truly an emergency. Emergencies are not always clearly labeled as such; "smoke" pouring into a waiting room may be caused by fire, or it may merely indicate a leak in a steam pipe. Screams in the street may signal an assault or a family quarrel. A man lying in a doorway may be having a coronary—or he may simply be sleeping off a drunken binge. In a crowd, each individual fears looking like a fool as a result of behaving as if a situation is an emergency when, in fact, it is not.

Even if a person defines an event as an emergency, the presence of other bystanders may still make each person less likely to intervene. Each individual feels that his or her responsibility is diffused and diluted. Thus, if your car breaks down on a busy highway, hundreds of drivers whiz by without anyone's stopping to help—but if you are stuck on a nearly deserted country road, whoever passes you first is likely to stop.

Thus, the stereotype of the unconcerned, depersonalized urbanite, blandly watching the misfortunes of others, proves inaccurate. Instead, we often find that a bystander to an emergency is an anguished individual in genuine doubt, wanting to do the right thing but compelled to make complex decisions under pressure of stress and fear. The bystander's reactions are shaped by the actions of others—and all too frequently by their inaction.

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## ESSAY TOPIC

According to Darley and Latané, what factors explain people's lack of response to others' distress? To what extent do you think that their ideas explain--or justify--such behavior? Write an essay responding to these questions; to develop your essay, be sure to discuss specific examples drawn from your own experience, your observation of others, or any of your reading—including "Why People Don't Help in a Crisis" itself.

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## Subject A Essay Question on "Alien Soil"

**DIRECTIONS:** Read carefully the passage and essay topic that follow the directions. Respond to the topic by writing an essay that is controlled by a central idea and is specifically developed. Be sure to review and proofread your essay and to make any revisions or corrections you wish.

Your essay will be evaluated on the basis of your ability to develop your central idea, to express yourself clearly, and to use the conventions of written English. The topic has no "correct" response.

As you read the passage, you may make reading notes on scratch paper. You should also use your scratch paper to plan your essay before you begin writing. Bear in mind that anything you have written on scratch paper will not be seen by the person evaluating your essay. Your actual essay must be written in the booklet you have received from your teacher; only writing that appears in this booklet will be evaluated.

If you are simulating actual Subject A essay administration conditions, you should allot two hours for your planning, writing, and editing.

### "Alien Soil"

**Introductory Note:** Born on the Caribbean island of Antigua, Jamaica Kincaid now lives in Vermont. She writes fiction about growing up in the West Indies and about the experience of West Indians who come to the United States. The following passage is adapted from an essay she published in 1993.

#### ALIEN SOIL

Whatever it is in the character of the English people that leads them to obsessively order and shape their landscape to such a degree that it looks like a painting--tamed, framed, captured, kind, decent, good, pretty--this quality of character is now blissfully lacking in the Antiguan people. I make this comparison only because so much of the character of the Antiguan people is influenced by and inherited from the English people.

The English first came to the island as slaveowners, when a man named Thomas Warner established a settlement there in 1632. When the English were a presence in Antigua, the places where they lived were surrounded by severely trimmed hedges of plumbago, by sculptured shrubs of frangipani and hibiscus. Their grass was green (odd, because water was scarce; the proper word for the climate is not "sunny" but "drought-ridden") and freshly cut. They kept trellises covered with roses, and beds of marigolds and chrysanthemums. When the English left, most of their landscaping influence went with them.

Before the English left, however, ordinary Antiguans--the ones who had some money and could live in houses of more than one room--had gardens in which only flowers were grown. (By "ordinary Antiguans" I mean the Antiguan people, who are descended from the African slaves brought to this island by Europeans; this turns out to be a not uncommon way to become ordinary.) These flower gardens made it even more apparent that these ordinary Antiguans had some money, because all their outside space was devoted not to



feeding their families but to the sheer beauty of things. I can remember in particular one such family, who lived in a house with many rooms--four, to be exact. They had an indoor kitchen and a place for bathing, though no indoor toilet. They had a lawn, always neatly cut, and beds of flowers in which I can now remember only roses and marigolds. I remember those because once I was sent there to get a bouquet of roses for my godmother on her birthday.

This family also had, in the middle of their small lawn, a willow tree, pruned so that it had the shape of a pine tree--a conical shape. At Christmastime this willow tree was decorated with colored lights, a custom that was so unusual and seemed so luxurious to me that when I passed by this house I would beg to be allowed to stop and stare at it for a while. At Christmas, all willow trees would suddenly be called Christmas trees, and for a time, when my family must have had a small amount of money, I, too, had a Christmas tree--a lonely, spindly branch of willow sitting in a bucket of water in our very small house. No one in my family and, I am almost certain, no one in the family of the people with the lighted-up willow tree had any idea of the origins of the Christmas tree and the traditions associated with it.

When these people (the Antiguans) lived under the influence of these other people (the English), there was naturally an attempt among some of them to imitate their rulers in this particular way--by rearranging the landscape--and they did it without question. They can't be faulted for not asking what it was they were doing; that is the way these things work.

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### **ESSAY TOPIC**

What general ideas about influence does Kincaid present through her discussion of how "ordinary Antiguans" responded to the example of the English? To what extent do her ideas confirm or conflict with your own observations of how individuals or groups respond to the influence of others? To develop your essay, be sure to discuss specific examples drawn from your own experience, your observation of others, or any of your reading--including "Alien Soil" itself.

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## **Subject A Essay Question on "The Appeal of the Democracy of Goods"**

**DIRECTIONS:** Read carefully the passage and essay topic that follow the directions. Respond to the topic by writing an essay that is controlled by a central idea and is specifically developed. Be sure to review and proofread your essay and to make any revisions or corrections you wish.

Your essay will be evaluated on the basis of your ability to develop your central idea, to express yourself clearly, and to use the conventions of written English. The topic has no "correct" response.

As you read the passage, you may make reading notes on scratch paper. You should also use your scratch paper to plan your essay before you begin writing. Bear in mind that anything you have written on scratch paper will not be seen by the person evaluating your essay. Your actual essay must be written in the booklet you have received from your teacher; only writing that appears in this booklet will be evaluated.

If you are simulating actual Subject A essay administration conditions, you should allot two hours for your planning, writing, and editing.

### **"The Appeal of the Democracy of Goods"**

**Introductory Note:** Roland Marchand is a professor of history at the University of California-Davis. His 1985 book *Advertising the American Dream* analyzes the strategies used to sell products in the United States from the 1920's through the 1940's. The following passage, adapted from his book, describes an important strategy from that era.

#### **THE APPEAL OF THE DEMOCRACY OF GOODS**

As they opened their September 1929 issue, readers of the *Ladies Home Journal* were treated to an account of the care and feeding of young Livingston Ludlow Biddle III, son and heir of the wealthy Biddles of Philadelphia, whose family coat-of-arms graced the upper right-hand corner of the page. Young Master Biddle, mounted on his tricycle, fixed a serious, slightly pouting gaze upon the reader, while the Cream of Wheat Corporation rapturously explained his constant care, his carefully regulated play and exercise, and the diet prescribed for him by "famous specialists." As master of Sunny Ridge Farm, the Biddle's winter estate in North Carolina, young Livingston III had "enjoyed luxury of social position and wealth, since the day he was born." Yet, by the grace of a modern providence, it happened that Livingston's health was protected by "a simple plan every mother can use." Mrs. Biddle gave Cream of Wheat to the young heir for both breakfast and supper. The world's foremost child experts knew of no better diet; great wealth could procure no finer nourishment. Cream of Wheat summarized the central point of the advertisement by claiming that "every mother can give her youngsters the fun and benefits of a Cream of Wheat breakfast just as do the parents of these boys and girls who have the best that wealth can command."

While enjoying this glimpse of childrearing among the socially distinguished, *Ladies Home Journal* readers found themselves drawn in by one of the most pervasive of all advertising strategies of the 1920's--the concept of the Democracy of Goods. According to this idea, the wonders of modern mass production and distribution enabled everyone to enjoy society's

most desirable pleasures, conveniences, or benefits. The particular pleasure, benefit, or convenience varied, of course, with each advertiser who used the formula. But the cumulative effect of the constant reminders that "any woman can..." and "every home can afford..." was to publicize an image of American society in which concentrated wealth at the top of a hierarchy of social classes restricted no family's opportunity to acquire the most desirable products. By implicitly defining "democracy" in terms of equal access to consumer products, these advertisements offered Americans an inviting vision of their society as one of incontestable equality.

In its most common advertising formula, the concept of the Democracy of Goods asserted that although the rich enjoyed a great variety of luxuries, the acquisition of their one most precious luxury would provide anyone with the ultimate in satisfaction. For instance, a Chase and Sanborn's Coffee advertisement, with an elegant butler serving a family in a dining room with a sixteen-foot ceiling, reminded Chicago families that although "compared with the riches of the more fortunate, your way of life may seem modest indeed," yet no one--"king, prince, statesman, or capitalist"--could enjoy better coffee. The Association of Soap and Glycerine Producers proclaimed that the charm of cleanliness was as readily available to the poor as to the rich, and Ivory Soap reassuringly related how one young housewife, who couldn't afford a \$780-a-year maid like her neighbor, still maintained "nice hands" by using Ivory. The C. F. Church Manufacturing Company epitomized this feature of the Democracy of Goods technique in an ad entitled "a bathroom luxury everyone can afford": "If you lived in one of those palatial apartments on Park Avenue, in New York City, where you have to pay \$2,000 to \$7,000 a year rent, you still couldn't have a better toilet seat in your bathroom than they have--the Church Sani-white Toilet Seat, which you can afford to have right now."

Thus, according to the concept of the Democracy of Goods, no differences in wealth could prevent the humblest citizens, provided they chose their purchases wisely, from coming home to a setting in which they could contemplate their essential equality, through possession of a particular product, with the nation's millionaires. In 1929, Howard Dickinson, a contributor to *Printers' Ink*, concisely expressed the social psychology behind Democracy of Goods advertisements: "'With whom do the mass of people think they want to foregather?' asks the psychologist in advertising. 'Why, with the wealthy and socially distinguished, of course! If we can't get an invitation to tea for our millions of customers, we can at least present the fellowship of using the same brand of merchandise. And it works.'"

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## ESSAY TOPIC

According to Marchand, what American ideals and desires underlay the appeal of the concept of the "democracy of goods" in the 1920's? Do you think that the appeal of today's advertising is based upon these same ideals and desires, or do you think that other ideals and desires are more powerful? To develop your essay, be sure to discuss the appeals of specific advertisements from any of the media.

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