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Re-assessing state writing assessment

Tracy Wright

Eastern Illinois University

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Re-Assessing State Writing Assessment

(TITLE)

BY

Tracy Wright

THESIS

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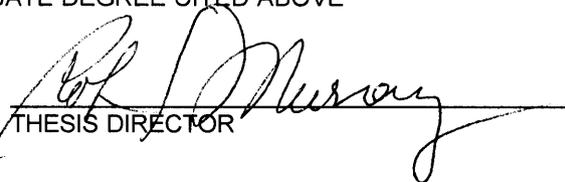
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Re-Assessing State Writing Assessment

Tracy Rae Wright

Abstract:

Because standardized testing is the means by which most student skills are assessed, it is important to ensure that such tests are accurately portraying student abilities. In the case of standardized writing tests it has become apparent that such tests are both unreliable and invalid and the tests, are, therefore, not doing what they are intended to do. Standardized writing tests do not create typical representations of student writing and in most cases only lead to the creation of formulaic writing—the five-paragraph essay. To achieve a more reliable and accurate measure of students' abilities to write states should look to portfolio assessment, which requires students to focus more on the writing process and on creating well written products reflecting student choice.

Re-assessing State Writing Assessment

**Eastern Illinois University
Graduate Thesis**

Tracy Wright

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Chapter 1: Introduction to State Writing Assessment

THE SCENERIO: ILLINOIS STANDARDS ASSESSMENT TESTING (ISAT)

Approximately twenty-seven junior high students file their way into my classroom where I have already set my portion of the testing scene for them--writing. Weeks ago I placed on the wall posters that exemplify the types of writing my students will currently be tested on, explaining the difference between each style and demonstrating what each style should look like, all the while supporting the development of a five-paragraph essay for each type. Examples of introductions, transitions, and common spelling mistakes are periodically posted throughout the room also. As a teacher, I have reviewed and re-reviewed typical testing responses so much that the students should know what they are to write and how they are to write it. And now, when the students enter the classroom for testing, their testing booklets and their answer sheets are already arranged alphabetically and the desks systematically distanced apart from each. Not only will this help to curtail cheating, but also having everything already in place ensures that we will *just* meet the time requirements necessary for the test within the time constraints of my forty-seven minute class period.

As we begin, students sigh, grumble, and complain. Some take the test so seriously that they make themselves sick; others could care less and let their sleepy eyelids settle longer than they should. I try to talk up the test as best I can; after all, many people feel the students' scores reflect how well I am teaching. I feel the pressure. Thankfully, when the students finally begin almost all settle in to do their best. That is because forty minutes from now these students are to hand over the best writing sample they have ever created over a topic they may or may not have ever thought about. Students feel the pressure. They have forty minutes to consider, create, and evaluate their writing sample. They cannot ask for input from me or from other students. They cannot even ask anyone what they thought of the end product. They cannot use the aid of dictionaries, thesauruses, or other reference materials. But these products created are

meant to be typical representations of my students' writing abilities, at least in the land of standardized testing.

THE PROBLEM WITH STANDARDIZED WRITING TESTS:

Ironically, while my students in the state of Illinois feel pressure to perform well on these ISAT tests, these tests are not what one would call "high-stakes" testing, where privilege is gained or lost as a result of students' scores. The goal of these tests is simply to ensure that most students are being empowered with adequate basic skills, in this case the ability to write well. The problem is that proper assessment of a skill like writing cannot be reduced to a single forty-minute testing experience. It is not possible for students to create a product under the constraints and adverse circumstances imposed by state standardized testing and have it be held as an accurate measure of a student's ability to write. Therefore, such testing procedures must themselves be assessed to determine if they are an appropriate means of assessing student writing.

To clarify the seriousness and hazardous effects of state testing, it must be first stated that it is difficult to assume that one *single* testing experience can be considered a valid or even a reliable measure of a student's overall ability to write, especially considering "errors in question design, scoring, and reporting have always been a part of standardized testing" ("Failing Our Children" 4). Indeed, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform also believes "no single test should ever be the sole determinant of a young adolescent's academic future," yet state and local bodies across the nation continue to take part in the enforcement of these tests, and as already said, often with the effect that students must pass these tests in order to graduate from high school, to be promoted to the next grade level, or to even have placement determined within high school or college courses (French 3). In these examples where state testing is a "high stakes" roll of the dice, officials neglect to look at the problems with state testing practices and assume that standardized testing is the only reliable manner of assessment, even though studies tend to show that these tests cannot do such things as accurately determine

course placement. In fact, research also indicates that often these high-stakes consequences increase drop out rates, particularly for students already at risk, leaving more and more students in the public education system without diplomas and necessary skills (Horn 33). In just the state of California this fact seems to be spiraling out of control with forty percent of Latinos and almost forty five percent of African Americans never graduating from Californian high schools at all, and such staggering percentages are being "tolerated and even encouraged" in an effort to have "schools' statistical performances artificially improved" (Buell 17). Further complicating the issue is that standardized tests are norm-referenced, meaning they are "specifically designed to ensure a certain proportion of 'failures'"—setting up both students and schools to lose ("Failing Our Children" 4- cited Haney 2002).

Are standardized tests, actually then, for the greater good of the educational system even though some students are being mislabeled, retained, or encouraged to drop out because of unreliable test scores? Can scores be considered accurate when research tends to show they fluctuate from year to year based on factors such as student turn over, staff changes, and even bad flue seasons ("Mandatory Testing")? The answer to these questions begins with assessing what the term "standardized testing" really means. While standardized testing is supposed to ensure that all students, nation wide, are reaching and retaining universalized standards, the reality is there are no universalized standards. In fact, the idea of standardized testing is obscure, as "standardization refers to the extent to which tasks, working conditions, and scoring criteria are all the same" (Hurst 45- cited Moss 1994b.110). But how then can standardization take place when no school has the exact same tasks, goals, or working conditions as another? Not all schools have the same influences or privileges, the same resources or opportunities, but all schools are expected to reproduce the same quality of product. Keep in mind that this standardization can only truly take place within each individual state, as each state is allowed to choose which form of state assessment test they wish to administer. The student scores of each state, though, are then compared to all other states, even though not all states have taken the same test. Because of this conflict in true standardization, Gregory Hillocks Jr. points out,

"assessments were developed more or less independently so that underlying conceptions of writing, standards, prompts, testing conditions, criteria, and scoring procedures differed from state to state" (17). In the area of writing assessment, some states value Focus more than Content; some value Purpose more than Focus-- how are such evaluations and differences then comparable? If these standardized tests do not even demonstrate a national standardization, then they are being inappropriately used when compared state to state and defeat their purpose. If not all tests are the same, or even require the same standards, then how can it be proven which students are or are not being left behind?

Further complicating this issue of standardization is which specific type of writing test each individual state actually chooses to use. Different state standardized tests value very different criteria. Some states focus on content standards for writing assessment and some on performance standards. Content standards measure what has been learned and what "knowledge" is correct within the written essay. Performance standards, on the other hand, show how a student demonstrates what he or she knows. If states have dueling standards, what is really important-- what one says or how one says it? As an example, the Texas state writing assessment focuses on Elaboration much more than anything else, which would be a performance standard, how it is done. An example of an essay that received a perfect score on Texas's writing exam, which is similar to the Illinois test, did not even address the topic the prompt provided (Mabry 680). Can this be considered good writing? Obviously the answer is "no," but as most state writing tests do address performance standards, logic isn't a category of assessment. Ironically, from interactions I have had with other English teachers and from my own personal expectations of students, I have found Logic to be a very important determining criteria for student success—if not the most important. Content is the core of any writing piece and needs to be evaluated justly so. By state standardized writing test rubrics not doing so, they enforce this "performance," which leads to a format or format for writing instead of enforcing the creation of a well-written product. So while there is a lack of standardization between states,

there is also often a barrier between local standards, which typically assess performance and content, and national standards, which typically only measure the one area of performance.

This lack of true standardization within state testing then compromises the validity of "national norms" and true student achievement. It also forces individuals and educators to further question the reliability of these tests, as the tests often do not even reflect individual state standards and goals, which are supposed to be the foundation of every school's curriculum in the state. While forty-two states currently claim that their assessments of education are aligned with the academic standards of their states respectively, it is not true; this lack of conformity between assessment and standards, therefore, undermines the entire reform to further evaluate learning and create accountability (Finn and Kanstoroom 149). Focusing on Illinois, one of the most regimented states with regard to standardized testing, and the state that I am most familiar with, this point can be demonstrated by evaluating the state's goals for writing in conjunction with the state's ISAT, Illinois Standards Achievement Test, testing experience.

Chapter 2: STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS:

A BRIEF HISTORY

The English Language Arts portion of the Illinois Learning Standards, first developed in 1985, breaks down into five main areas, or goals: Reading, Literature, Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Research. In teaching students these five goals and their subsequent learning standards, the assumption has always been then that students will perform well on the state's standardized tests, but this is not the case when the test does not reflect what the standards wish to achieve. In order to illustrate this problem, it is necessary to examine the Illinois English Language Arts Goals, particularly Goal Three, Writing.

SECTION I

Illinois Learning Standards**English Language Arts—Writing**

State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes

Why this goal is important:

The ability to write clearly is essential to any person's effective communication. Students with high-level writing skills can produce documents that show planning and organization, and effectively convey the intended message and meaning. Clear writing is critical to employment and production in today's world. Individuals must be capable of writing for a variety of audiences in differing styles, including standard rhetorical themes, business letters and reports, financial proposals, and technical and professional communications. Students should be able to use word processors and computers to enhance their writing proficiency and improve their career opportunities.

English Language Arts Standards in Writing:

Learning Standard A: Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and structure.

Learning Standard B: Compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences.

Learning Standard C: Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.

(<http://www.isbe.state.il.us>)

While Goal Three and Learning Standards A, B, and C, are clearly geared toward improving writing and setting acceptable goals which all children should strive for, ironically, Goal Three, Learning Standard B has never been supported nor tested by Illinois state testing and assessment. The Illinois Standard Achievement Testing, or ISAT, requires only one or two types of writing out of three choices: narrative, expository, and persuasive. Because of this focus on only three genres, it is obvious that the state's children are not being assessed on a variety of writings. Bob Broad too addresses this issue of varied writing genres by stating, "With only one or two types of writing included (depending on the grade level) in the test, students can hardly accomplish Goal Three" – writing to communicate for a variety of purposes ("Proposal for New Statewide Assessment" 10). As a result, teachers often homogenize the teaching of all three writing styles to meet the "performance" expectations set for all three types of essays (Hillocks

125)-- that expectation being the five-paragraph essay. In addition, when taking these tests, students do not have much choice in their writing topics, sometimes being given only two narrow options. The audience during these tests is also always the same, anonymous testing evaluators. In fact, for those jumping on the multi-million dollar bandwagon of test preparation materials, some spending tens of thousands of dollars a year (McNeil), the reality is that most of the supportive drill items, examples, and worksheets used for writing practice do not even address issues of audience and purpose (Kixmiller 30). While Illinois state goals seem to advocate variety in these areas of purpose, topic, audience, and even style, the Illinois state standardized test has never even allowed or respected differences in any of these categories; obviously, the test does not reflect the standards. Therefore, students are not being taught to account for these differences, but to fit their writing into the state testing practices instead.

To clarify this point, Illinois, too, developed its own writing rubric to which it suggested teachers across the state apply their everyday student writing in preparation for ISAT testing. The basis is that the created Write-On Illinois rubrics evaluate writing on the areas of Focus, Support/Elaboration, and Organization, allowing a possibility of six scoring points for each of these areas. In addition, "Conventions," looking at overall mechanics of the paper, are scored one point for a minus paper, or a mechanically underdeveloped paper, and two points for a plus, or mechanically developed paper. A total "Integration" score is then arrived at and multiplied by two, thus giving a total of thirty-two points possible for each student's essay. Scores can range from six to a thirty-two points. An example of the ISAT rubric for middle/junior high students is as follows.

ISAT Student-Friendly Rubric • Middle/Junior High School—

Persuasive/Expository

	Focus	Elaboration	Organization	Integration
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My subject or position is clear. • I have an engaging opening. • I commented on my subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used many ways to develop details and support, such as evidence, explanations, and examples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used appropriate paragraphing. • My writing flows easily from one idea to the next. • I varied my 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a fully developed paper for my grade level. • I have a clear and developed focus. • I included

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have an effective closing that ends the paper and ties the whole paper together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of my major points are developed in specific detail. • I used interesting words throughout. • I used details evenly. 	<p>sentence structure and word choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of my paragraphing is purposeful and appropriate. • I tied my sentences and paragraphs together in different ways, such as parallel structure, pronouns, transitions that indicate time, to make my story flow (coherence and cohesion). 	<p>balanced, specific details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My sentences and paragraphs fit smoothly together.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wrote an introduction that makes my subject and position clear. • My closing does more than restate what is in my introduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used details throughout. • I used several ways to develop details such as, evidence, explanation, and examples. • I used interesting words to add detail and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used appropriate paragraphing. • My writing flows easily from one idea to the next. • I varied my sentence structure. • Most of my points are appropriately paragraphed. • Some of the word choice and sentence structure I used produces cohesion. • I tied my sentences and paragraphs together in different ways, such as parallel structure, transitions, pronouns, and repetition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a developed paper for my grade level. • I have a clear and developed focus. • I included specific details. • Some parts of my paper are better than others.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My subject or position may be introduced by previewing in the introduction. • If I previewed, I talked about only those points I previewed. • My conclusion may be a restatement of the introduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used many details. I developed most of my main points with specific details. • All of my key points are supported, but some may have more support than others. • I may have used some interesting words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of my paragraphing is appropriate. • Most of my writing flows from one idea to the next. • I tied my sentences and paragraphs together in different ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My paper is simple, yet clear and appropriate for my grade level. • I included the essentials but nothing more.

3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My subject or position is identified in a brief opening or at least somewhere in the paper. • I may have talked about more or fewer points than I stated in my introduction. • I may not have a closing. • I may not have written enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the major points in my paper may be developed by specific detail. • I may have included some details that give information beyond the major point. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may have used transitions in my paragraphs that confuse my readers. • I used some appropriate paragraphing. • I may have drifted off the subject. • My writing does not flow from one idea to the next. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My paper is partially developed for my grade level. • My readers may need to figure out what I am writing about because at least one of the features is not complete.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My subject and event may be unclear. • I may have been repetitious. • I may have drifted off the subject. • I may have written a response that is not persuasive or expository. • I have written about multiple subjects or positions without tying them together. • I may not have written enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used few details. • I may have used a list of details that have some extensions. • I have only written general details, or I have merely repeated information over and over. • I may not have written enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My writing has few appropriate paragraphs. • I drifted way off the subject. • My writing does not flow from one idea to the next. • The sentences in my paragraphs can be reordered without changing the meaning. • My paper is not persuasive or expository. • I may not have written enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am beginning to use the features of writing. • My paper is confusing. • I may not have written enough. • I did not write a persuasive or expository paper.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My writing is confusing. • I have not written enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My writing includes no details, or the details I include are confusing. • I have not written enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My writing is confusing. • I may not have written enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My writing is confusing. • I did not fulfill the assignment. • I did not write enough.
Conventions				
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have mastered correct use of sentence construction. • I use pronouns correctly. • I have few run-ons or fragments in proportion to the amount I have written. • I have mastered basic use of punctuation and capitalization. • I have mastered correct use of verb tense and subject-verb agreement. • I have few minor and very few major errors in my writing. 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of errors in my paper interferes with my readers' understanding of what I have written. 	

As a product of the Illinois educational system, graduating from a small Illinois public school in 1995, and a current teacher in the state with six years experience, I have had much

experience with this rubric and the products created as a result of it. I can personally testify to what is typically considered the expectation of both the Write-On Illinois rubric and of the Illinois State standardized writing test itself. While not explicitly stated within the rubric, it is common knowledge among both students and teachers throughout the state that the expectation is the often referenced to five- paragraph essay:

- Paragraph One: Restate the question and preview the three points to be discussed
- Paragraph Two: First, and give one area of support for the topic (three -four sentences)
- Paragraph Three: Second, and give the second area of support for the topic
(three -four sentences)
- Paragraph Four: Finally, and give the last area of support for the topic
(three -four sentences)
- Paragraph Five: In conclusion, and restate the introduction

This five-paragraph format is so embedded into the state's silent code that students spit it back out in almost all districts and across most disciplines. Students come to believe that all writing must take on this form and students incorporate this specifically laid out plan into all writing. To clarify, I admit I was taught to write in this manner and since then my educational career has enforced it; workshops have enforced it; conferences have enforced it, and still the rubric and the test enforce it. And I too must enforce it in my classroom, because I know it is the expectation from the state.

To see how this rubric sets up the expectation of a five-paragraph essay, consider first a six scoring for the area of Focus. It states, "My subject or position is clear." Even though "clear" may be an ambiguous term used in context to writing, as it is not exactly defined how clearly the topic must be presented, within the introduction most Illinois educators realize that "clear" means restating the question posed and then previewing the points to be discussed. In fact, for many years the rubric actually demanded these preview points, which may be why this listing of details is still the generally accepted practice. But when looking more carefully at the rubric, it still seems to indicate that, indeed, all points of support used in the paper should be listed in the introduction. After all, a lower scoring of three in the area of Focus dictates, "I may have talked about more or fewer points than I have *stated* in my introduction." Seemingly, this standard rubric still demands previewing the points.

Following, while the rubric does not enforce a specific number of paragraphs, it is well known across the state that the magic number is five. Ask almost any student to write an essay, and they will ask if you want five paragraphs. According to the state's rubric, for a student's essay to be reduced to a score of two for Organization, the rubric simply states, "My writing has few appropriate paragraphs," indicating that numbers do matter. A focus then becomes on quantity and not quality.

The rest of the rubric too is littered with inconsistencies and ambiguities. It states there should be "interesting words" and details should be used "evenly," but the rubric does not necessarily specify these details are to be presented coherently or logically. There is to be "appropriate paragraphing" and sentences are to be "tied" to paragraphs, typically assumed to be by words like first, second, finally, and in conclusion. The argument or final product of material does not need to be strongly presented or even interesting, just glued together correctly. The rubric specifies length and form, not content and quality.

Such a rubric system does help to make the evaluation process more reliable, but there are drawbacks to its simplicity. While Write-On Illinois rubrics are *supposed* to alter based on the specific type of writing students are involved in, narrative, persuasive, or expository, "they differ so little that the rubric is almost homogenized across the spectrum for all styles of writing" (Hillocks 116). In addition, areas such as creativity, voice, and style are not even evaluated or considered within an essay. Such tight and stodgy rubrics appear to be nothing more than "translations of visions of desirable performance into specifications of exactly what is desired," indicating that writing must follow a specific code in order to be considered good (Mabry 676). Lori Kixmiller maintains, "Teachers have already been pushed into a testing culture that sees writing as a quantifiable process—one that can be categorized, classified, and rated on a scale of 1 to 6" (30). But, does following the rubric to the point of developing a code or a format lead to good writing? And, an even larger issue is whether or not the importance of these rubrics and assessments are to simply achieve the grade needed, or to achieve learning.

Good writing must be evaluated holistically by looking at the entire piece as a representation, not by just considering isolated elements of the work. Rubrics and state assessments claim that by reaching a consensus of a single number score for each essay, a holistic score is what they are succeeding in establishing. Linda Maybry, on the other hand, believes that because rubrics "prescribe the criteria by which papers are to be judged, claims to their holism rarely survive analysis" (675). These rubrics do not assess writing as they should, but break down works into clearly defined tasks to be evaluated individually, undervaluing areas such as style, content, and creativity and demeaning the essays as a whole. Thus, by valuing such a specific rubric, Illinois has lost many of the elements necessary for good writing. Students write exactly what evaluators want to read and their writing itself becomes a formula or format which judges can easily rate.

REACTION TO STANDARDIZED TESTING IN ILLINOIS:

THE CASE OF THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY

In 2002 Gregory Hillocks Jr. published The Testing Trap, revealing his study concerning the impact of state standardized testing on five states across the nation: Illinois, Kentucky, New York, Oregon, and Texas. Hillocks interviewed teachers across each state and found that because of the reality that there are consequences for low tests scores and a call for more tests, many teachers, specifically those in Illinois, felt they must condescend and spend ample time focusing on preparing students for state standardized testing, instead of focusing on teaching the goals and standards set up by the state. Hillocks found that 54% of Illinois teachers admitted to teaching to the test (Hillocks 123). This means more than half of all English educators admitted to teaching students to adhere to the Write-On Illinois rubric and to follow the embedded elements of the "standard" essay supported by this rubric—the already mentioned the five-paragraph essay. Glenda Moss, an assistant professor in the School of Education at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, advocates it is, "the scoring rubric of the standardized test and pressure to teach our students how to be successful based on that rubric that resulted in

formulaic writing" – the five paragraph essay (2). Indeed, according to Gregory Hillocks, 72% of Illinois educators have enforced this style of writing because of the influences of state testing and the need to make the grade (125). Thus, because of expectations enforced by state testing and standardized rubrics, student writing too often takes on the five- paragraph form and writing becomes a forced, mechanical operation. In fact, while the focus of this essay is the state of Illinois, the infamous five-paragraph essay can be found across the nation. In Michigan, Dudley Barlow, an English teacher at Plymouth Canton High School believes "many students never get beyond that form" (40). The form too has been sited in Texas where educators came to realize "that overemphasis on the five-paragraph theme had locked students into thinking it was the only way to write," and still is (Moss). The form is now making headway in Indiana where it is believed "the test will change how teachers teach," and lead to another formulaic writing state (Moss).

While this five-paragraph formula makes for nice, safe, clean writing, it also lacks these necessary criteria considered so valuable to writing and its process: thought, emotion, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Illinois state administrator Carmen Chapman, who advocates all aspects of the state writing test, including the focus on the controversial five-paragraph essay, maintains, "since educators can use writing to stimulate students' higher-order thinking skills-- such as the ability to make logical connection, to compare and contrast, and to adequately support arguments and conclusions- authentic assessment seems to offer excellent criteria for teaching and evaluating writing" (Hillocks 123). According to Chapman, there is nothing wrong with the five-paragraph essay, but does it do what she implies- "stimulate" and "connect" to a degree of excellence? The reality is, this method teaches students the formula to get the grade, how to take the test, and throws out any bit of individualism. Students are expected to conform to the topic and to the format in order to do well on the test, but don't truly have to show any amount of thought. It becomes the "vacuous" writing that secondary educators tire of seeing and the annoying habit that universities cringe at (Hillocks 173). As Chapman admires this writing style and believes it can inspire excellence, it is ironic that many Illinois universities

condemn it. Hillocks states that the English department at Illinois State University went so far as to issue a manual for freshman English that explicitly says that the five paragraph essay is not appropriate for the college level, and why it *may* have been appropriate at the secondary level, and this is a huge *maybe*, it expresses nothing more than "artificiality . . . warps the subject at hand" (Hillocks 136- Neuleib, 1999, 5). Writing is not a mad-lib fill in the blank where as long as the format is correct, it doesn't matter what words one picks and chooses to put into it, but state testing seems to view it as such by enforcing the five-paragraph essay for all levels of testing. It *may* be a good starting point, but for developing student writers, the five- paragraph essay does not embody good writing, let alone stimulate students or force them to connect issues.

Therefore, the test does not work in accordance to what society truly wants to achieve by it-- learning and better writing. The state standardized writing test and it accompanying rubric merely require students to follow the expected format, the expectation of the five-paragraph essay.

With the current push for more state testing and a further push for repercussions for those that do not achieve adequate test scores, I decided to administer a survey questioning current educators about their particular teaching practices in relation to state standardized testing and to ascertain, if possible, general beliefs and feelings about Illinois state standardized testing (See Appendix A), focusing on ISAT for lower educational levels, but also encompassing the PSAE given exclusively to high school juniors. The goal was to see if the current data still supported Hillocks' research and to evaluate educators' views of standardized testing and its relationship with the five-paragraph essay. To obtain this information, an electronic survey was randomly delivered to 364 public school educators across the state of Illinois. The only requirements for participants were they needed to be Illinois public school educators currently holding teaching certificates and they needed to be presently teaching English language arts courses to students in grade 7-12. Location, student population, gender, and ethnicity were not considered factors. Of the 364 participants, 154 persons completed the survey for a respondent rate of 42%.

Much like Hillocks, I found that 68% of those educators surveyed indicated that ISAT and PSAT testing has, indeed, affected what teachers teach within the classroom. Thus, teachers are feeling it necessary to alter curricula to accommodate for state testing at all levels. In addition, 72% of educators surveyed admitted that because of state standardized tests they felt they had decreased the amount of time spent on instruction in non-tested areas. Thus, an obvious result of standardized testing is teaching to the test and as it is the expectation of standardized testing, one area of that focus obviously becomes the five-paragraph essay, with 56% of respondents believing it to be the best manner of preparing for standardized writing tests and therefore focusing on teaching this manner of writing to their students.

While this percentage is lower than anticipated, it must also be pointed out that 12% of respondents were undecided as to whether or not it was the best manner and 8% choose to simply not answer. These percentages themselves obviously demonstrate the five-paragraph's essay importance, with a minimum of 56% believing it to be the best manner of preparing and probably using it to prepare students, especially as a result of the "performance" testing domain. Because of this prevalence within the educational system it is no wonder that so many students consider the five-paragraph essay as the typical method of creating any writing sample. Astoundingly 84% reported the five-paragraph essay is an overall acceptable form of writing.

Yet, it must be noted that most clarified the five-paragraph essay exists as a starting point and called it, "good for beginning writers," "a good, basic tool," "limited in scope, but acceptable," and "a means to an end." Such findings leaves educators wondering how much importance should be placed on this strict form of writing, especially since it is often the preferred form of writing in connection to writing tests. If teachers teach all students this form, and it is the "requirement" of the test, then all student writing takes on a unauthentic quality that leaves the best and worst of writers striving for the same expectations. The quality of writing becomes truly minimal and not truly "writing," but a matter of fill-in-the-blank with the topic supplied. With so many teachers relying on the five-paragraph essay as the proper means of writing because of state testing, students do not have to achieve greater writing skills, but only

need learn how to "perform" for the test. It is like memorizing a song for a performance, but never writing one oneself.

OVERVIEW OF STATE STANDARDIZED WRITING TESTS

Because of such a focus on form, state standardized writing tests do not measure a student's ability to write, but instead determine a student's ability to regurgitate a five-paragraph essay on a topic chosen by testing officials. Linda Mabry sums it up when she states that overall, such testing has been proven to be not "very diagnostic, not very sensitive to individual attainment, nor very helpful in prescribing appropriate remediation, and not very supportive of teaching or learning" (Mabry 691). Realistically, state testing does nothing more than wholly and entirely negate the idea of writing having any importance at all by making form drive what is written instead of looking at both how a piece is written and what the piece says. While teachers dictate the standard format for student writing and drill this format into students' heads because it is what the test requires, the oxymoron is that the test reflects nothing of what is truly being *taught* in the classroom—a need for students to develop a writing process of their own and to be able to logically and coherently put an arguments/narratives together. Teachers *supply* the formula and ensure that students follow it, but they *teach* students to write differently. That is to say, most teachers, 96% of the educators involved in my survey, spend an immense amount of time trying to maintain the idea that writing is an on-going process; one that requires revision and editing; one that is better with collaboration and creativity; one that requires thought and planning. State testing ignores all of these aspects and instead of teaching becoming learning, it simply becomes recitation (Smith 280). State testing sends such mixed messages to students, that no one knows what should truly be valued in writing anymore (Holt and Baker 39).

We should also consider the absence of the writing process in this testing situation. As already stated, students are given forty-five minutes to come up with their best essays of the year directed toward an ambiguous audience and over a topic that they may or may not have been previously exposed to or even thought about. Students are expected to compose a thesis

and all supporting ideas within a limited time using a couple of scratch pieces of paper attached to their answer sheets. There is not time for the brainstorming, outlining, pre-writing, revising, and editing steps which students typically learn and integrate into their own writing processes. Process and collaborative pedagogies are non-existent in this testing situation, even though they have been enforced, more often than not, throughout the year within the classroom by the interactions with the teacher, other faculty, tutors, peers, and other resources (Smith 282). During the test, students are not even allowed to use reference materials, including dictionaries, thesauruses, and quotation books. There is not time to synthesize and reflect over a prompt or a question and achieve all of the higher levels of questioning that are said to be so important by experts such as the famous Madeline Hunter. There is no learning being achieved or even reflected at all.

In addition, the individual process of writing is so far removed that instead of a sample of a typical student's writing, evaluating crews will receive nothing more than a formulaic regurgitation of a five-paragraph essay that may or may not have anything to do with the prompt. Students recall that expected formula supplied to them so many times and over for so many years, instead of writing the way they would like. As one respondent of the survey put it, evaluators will see only a "snapshot of a student's skills." Therefore, the writing that comes out of state testing is not typical writing; yet it is negatively unique in that students will "never in any course (*even of life*) be tested on writing apart from being asked to examine, remember, or respond to some information that has been, itself, the subject of the course" (Smith 283). State standardized testing creates unnatural writing and is irrelevant to student learning.

But because states administer such rigorous test preparation activities enforcing this standard response (which will indeed improve scores) the assumption is that greater learning and better writing skills are being achieved. This is not true; educators and students have simply learned to break the code to get the score they wish to achieve. It is true, however, that as the push for real world writing emerges, "Narrow test preparation is not necessarily the kind of writing that will be useful to students" (Manzo 2). Therefore, not only do standardized writing

tests not inspire learning, but they also do not prepare students for their future writing endeavors.

In fact, testing is so unconnected to student's learning that it creates issues over who is the authority—the test or the teacher. Ideally, students consider the educators who teach them to be authorities on the disciplines they teach, but these authority figures are obsolete when it comes to state testing. Not only can these educators not be approached by students concerning issues of the test (questions, clarifications, or collaboration), but in Illinois these teachers have never had a say in the scoring of the essays. The authority to which the essays have always been submitted has been an unknown third party who knows nothing of the writer or the writer's environment (Smith 287).

But in the case of the ISAT testing, it is even more startling how the evaluating of these products is being done. Apparently it should only take ISAT evaluators sixty seconds to determine an accurate score of an essay. That equals sixty essays in sixty minutes (Hillocks 120). How is it possible for a staff of evaluators, possibly not even educators, to come to a reliable and valid score of a student's essay within one small minute? Sixty-eight percent of those involved within my survey did not know the answer to that question either and did not find it possible to evaluate student work in that short amount of time. In truth, the answer lays in the fact that evaluators look for the formula and not at what the essay truly says-- an injustice to the dynamics of writing. It is understood that explicit rubrics are meant to improve rater reliability (Mabry 679), but such a stagnant look at writing truly undervalues what is written.

In addition, if students are to learn from their writing, a goal Chapman claims is so important, how do test advocators account for the lack of the reflective and necessary steps of feedback and response? After a student completes a test, he or she will not receive a score from that test until the following year. By then, for the majority of the students, the test has been forgotten. The score they receive means nothing because it cannot be realistically applied to a work that meant nothing to them from the beginning and was accomplished over a year earlier. But that is all a student receives, a score, not the text to apply it to, and not even a justification

of the score, just a lonely number that is supposed to represent the student within the parameters of state and national norms. Where are the comments and connections to help students attain the next level of thought? They are absent; the score is expected to reflect all.

Also ironic is that when students write their different types of essays, some of these students are set up for failure even before they begin because the environmental circumstances in which these high-pressure essays are produced are not typical or even justifiably rational. First, state testing is done within a matter of two to five days, depending on the school's scheduling. After teachers have spent weeks reviewing the criteria from and formats for these tests, as is highly advised by most administrators, hanging posters that provide examples of these formats and suitable transitions, and providing a run-through of a practice test, the entire situation spirals out of the teacher's hands and testing begins (French 7). Students may spend only one hour a day taking tests, in multiple disciplines being dragged over multiple days, or they may have many tests crammed into one or two chaotic days. Having personally experienced both radical methods, I can attest to the fact that neither manner of administering the testing is enjoyable, or easy. Students are not only stressed out by the amount of testing, and burnt out by the amount of time devoted to the process (practice and test), but also agitated by the shifts from normalcy. Class schedules are changed to accommodate the testing; lunch times are rearranged; bathroom breaks are revoked --and all for the sake of these tests.

But even if one doesn't agree with the idea that children are creatures of habit, there are other environmental issues that cannot be ignored. Some classes are too hot and some are too cold. Classrooms are also currently overcrowded with as many as thirty plus children present under the watch of only one teacher. While teachers can monitor talking and whispering, they cannot tell the child that continues to cough, to stop. They may not know that a student's chair is being kicked or vibrated by the student next to him. This does not even take into account the tapping of pencils or the fact that the person in the neighboring desk may have an overpowering smell. We have all experienced these interferences to some degree. These are all interferences that can affect a writer's thought and therefore, the validity of any test (French 3- Cited Kamin).

But, there are multiple other questions that must be considered when examining a test taker's, or writer's, optimal writing scenario: Is the writer in the mood to perform? Is the writer comfortable or uncomfortable? Is the writer tired, hyper-active, nervous, or even ill? Did the writer remember his or her medication? These environmental issues may seem small and petty, but they affect the writer and his or her process, not to mention a product that may have "high-stakes" consequences not only for the student, but also for teachers and districts.

Many assume that any criticism and rejection of state testing reflects the idea there should be no assessment whatsoever. This is not the case. Current assessment procedures have, indeed, had some very positive impacts on the educational system. State testing has illuminated some areas of inadequacy and has forced troubled schools to make changes when they may not have done so otherwise. Reform has led to more funds being allocated to before- and after-school programs, teacher aides, and other necessary programs (Finn and Kanstoroom 133). Fewer students, specifically poor and minority children, are seemingly falling through the cracks. However, as the definition of literacy processes and the use of pedagogical practices have changed, neither the test nor the test environment has significantly changed—"traditional modes of assessment (i.e. standardized tests) have not kept theoretical pace with other advances in literacy education" (Roe and Vukelich 148). While educators advocate varying perspectives, the test only requires one. Therefore it is now time to advocate a new, more valid and reliable manner of showing what students know and how well they demonstrate it. While it would be great to live in a utopian society where children thrived on learning and doing things to the best of their ability, the reality is that without rewards or repercussions, many students would endeavor to achieve very little. Therefore, an alternate form of assessment to state standardized writing tests should be developed in order to evaluate student improvement, learning, and adherence to standards arrived upon. Presently, the best (and most effective, valid, and authentic) alternative to standardized testing is portfolio assessment.

Chapter 3: ALTERNATIVES TO STATE STANDARDIZED WRITING ASSESSMENT

AN ANSWER FROM LEGISLATION:

While most educators would advocate writing as an important skill across all educational disciplines, over the last couple of years Illinois legislation has struggled with where its place is in the land of state standardized testing. In fact, in August of 2004, Illinois State Legislation came to the consensus that because standardized testing in the English language arts domain of writing was too expensive and, at the time, not one of the specific areas of required testing in President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* act, the state would no longer require the writing portion of ISAT testing. While many Illinois educators felt that the elimination of the state test was the appropriate movement away from formulaic writing, the change came about for the wrong reason. Money should not have been the driving force to dismiss this form of assessment and legislation did not truly consider the repercussions such a drastic decision could have created. Indeed, by dismissing the test, legislation deemed writing as less important than other educational areas and labeled it as not worthy of state tax dollars. Ironically, after years of the state advocating writing across the curriculum and encouraging all disciplines to invest time in writing—science, social studies, math, art, and even P.E.—the state legislation made a decision, in and of itself, that could have erased the fact that all disciplines were involved in supporting writing, even though not the degree of good writing we would like to see. The state legislation should have considered, after all, that teacher accountability is often determined through student test scores, and teachers must teach what will be on the test. If writing is not a part of that test, many disciplines will not continue to invest the time they should performing this task.

Yet for reasons unknown to many, including myself, a press release revealed this summer indicates that the Illinois State Legislation will once again implement the writing portion of the state standardized test effective for the upcoming school year. Indeed this move does further guarantee classrooms will continue focusing on writing, but coming back full circle, we are still left with the question of does state standardized testing enable students to create solid,

intelligent, and good writing, or does it advocate students to follow a form that makes all student writing appear similar, systematic, and robotic? Realistically, the effects of state standardized testing-- teaching to the test, relying on specific test preparation activities, and coaching-- do increase scores and make it appear that greater learning is being achieved, but these shortcuts, such as the five-paragraph essay, do not equate learning and thus do not create the quality of writing we should expect from our children (Horn 35). Because learning is the true goal of educational systems, the future of state writing assessment should not be reduced to a timed test, but instead, should involve an assessment that advocates writing as a creative, reflective process. At the current time, the best choice is a portfolio method of assessment that evaluates true student writing, and not just the ability to imitate a formula.

A BETTER ANSWER: PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

The writing portfolio has become an increasingly more prevalent assessment tool in many school districts because it provides students with a way to maintain a collection of their own writing. Districts evaluate student progress and assess their writing programs with these portfolios. Students take them with them as a sampling of their best work for university admission and future employers. But using these portfolios as a tool of state and national assessment has only recently made headway, primarily in states like Kentucky and Oregon. It must be stated clearly that a portfolio is not simply a folder to dump completed papers into, but instead is a compilation of "works collected and saved to show the improvement or regression of students' progress" (Roe and Vukelich 152). Similarly, *The Kentucky Writing Portfolio Development, Teacher's Handbook* addresses portfolios as being a "purposeful selection of student work that exhibits a student's efforts and achievement" (Hillocks 163). In this manner, assessment through portfolios becomes "writing without testing" (Smith 280) and encourages true writing to the effect that students want to assume ownership and take responsibility for their writing. The shift is from an isolated experience to a process that initiates true learning on multiple levels.

To begin, students submit real classroom products, from real classroom assignments to their portfolios, a focus on that writing across the curriculum already mentioned. Students are allowed to choose which works they believe represent themselves the best based on categories of being 1) expressive, 2) reflective, 3) literary, 4) transactive, and 5) across-the-curriculum (Hillocks 165). While not only encompassing a variety of genres and showing how writing takes many "forms"-- essays, reports, reviews, short stories, and even poetry can be a part of a student's portfolio-- another advantage is that these representative works may include both fiction and non-fiction writing, a major deviation from standardized testing, allowing students to find their own niches and express themselves in multiple manners. Also, by requiring an across the curriculum product, portfolio assessment also inspires writing in all other disciplines. This writing from other areas is meant to reinforce real world writing geared toward a variety of audiences and further advocating writing for communication. These products relay classroom interactions with society into writing, truly doing what Chapman only claims for Illinois testing, stimulating students to make connections, use logic, and learn to find support through sources and collaboration. Writing becomes writing and teaching becomes teaching--portfolios link assessment with instruction without making instruction strictly reflect assessment. In addition, there is no formula to follow and the five-paragraph essay need not be drilled into every student's head. The process is much more individualized and personal:

The sequence begins with reading examples of the kind of writing [students] will be producing and lists as series of questions about typical beginning, endings, supporting details, tone, sentences, and language. Because they are intended for any genre, the questions must be broad. Step 2 involves deciding on a topic; 3, narrowing the focus; 4, analyzing the audience; 5, defining the writing task, including the writer's role, the audience, and the purpose; 6, planning and doing supporting research; 7, organizing details; and finally, the steps of drafting, revising, and editing. (Hillocks 170)

The benefits of portfolio assessment are vast. Instead of writing in an unnatural situation, students are involved with writing on so many more levels with portfolios and employ

the recursive steps of critical thinking, expressing, rethinking, and revision (Harrison 44). In fact, portfolio writing becomes not just a reflection of student writing, but also a "collection of a learner's work in reading, writing, and thinking" ("Portfolio Assessment"). Students learn to "build bridges of coherence and continuity" by promoting growth and personal development (Condon 205). Because of these bridges, portfolio assessment becomes a tool to identify student-writing characteristics, strengths, and needs (Sewell). Teachers get a comprehensive record of student process and progress; they can identify deficiencies and illustrate developmental strategies to improve overall student writing, and not just improvement one particular piece.

In some portfolio systems this process of improvement even begins with students designating where and what that improvement should be by clearly defining the rationale or purpose prior to compiling either the individual pieces or the overall portfolio itself (Cole and Struyk 263). Students themselves "determine the purpose of the learning experience" (Cole and Struyk 263). So much more learning and thought is engaged with portfolios as students create individual goals and personal objectives and must themselves learn to choose topics, consider audience, and have a purpose, all of which encourage writers to develop their own style, technique, and voice – difficult but important aspects of writing (Claywell 8). With portfolio assessment students have choice and reason; their writing isn't already depicted for them. The classroom reflects the "test" and truly the state's standards, as the test becomes the classroom writing.

With portfolios, there is also this rebirth in the importance of the writing process. Students are able to transfer those "steps" of brainstorming, drafting, revising, etc. into their own process and make it a part of them. Time becomes a companion instead of an enemy. With the product developing through the writing process method and not just from a formulaic fill-in-the-blank, students can idealize their writing environment by typically choosing when, where, and how the writing should take place. If school is a sub-par environment, students can do drafting elsewhere, but participate in the revision and editing steps at school. There is actually time for

the collaboration and revision steps, unlike with standardized testing. From this, teaching also becomes learning as students learn what works for them and what does not. They also learn to become better evaluators by critiquing others' works, thus enabling them to better self-deliver feedback and identify personal errors earlier in their own process (Hill 3). Students learn to not only give criticism, but also to receive it with grace. Also the product being evaluated is representative of what students write and the students can take ownership by deciding what they consider the best and deem worthy of being evaluated. Students become responsible for completing their entire personal writing process and choosing their own individualized product.

Portfolio writing also has a focus on both performance and content standards, as both are important to the integrity of any piece of writing. States like Kentucky dismiss the analytical side of evaluating works with criteria such as Focus, Support, Organization, Conventions, and Integration, and instead deem works as Novice, Apprentice, Proficient, or Distinguished pieces. While Kentucky does consider such criteria such as Purpose/Audience, Idea Development, Organization, Sentence, and Language, these areas are not given physical scores. Instead, these elements are considered in context to the holistic score. Therefore, these criteria do have an impact on the score given, but the rubric is versatile enough to accommodate essays that may be deficient in one area but excels in others without assigning an overall sub-standard grade.

The scoring guide for Kentucky's writing assessment included below highlights this versatility. Included are not only the overall categories a work can be determined to be, but also the scoring criterion that helps educators determine where student works fit. Please note the drastic differences between Kentucky's expectations for student writing and those expectations previously stated for states like Illinois. Kentucky advocates students finding voice, varying their writing styles, and using outside sources, as well as ensuring the correctness of a piece of writing. While Illinois state standards mirror these expectations, the test has never required any of them.

**KENTUCKY WRITING
ASSESSMENT**

Portfolio ID _____

Holistic Scoring Guide

1	2	3	4
NOVICE	APPRENTICE	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Limited awareness of audience and/or purpose • • Minimal idea development; limited and/or unrelated details • • Random and/or weak organization • • Incorrect and/or ineffective sentence structure • • Incorrect and/or ineffective language • • Errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are disproportionate to length and complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Some evidence of communicating with an audience for a specific purpose; some lapses in focus • • Unelaborated idea development; unelaborated and/or repetitious details • • Lapses in organization and/or coherence • • Simplistic and/or awkward sentence structure • • Simplistic and/or imprecise language • • Some errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization that do not interfere with communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Focused on a purpose; communicates with an audience; evidence of voice and/or suitable tone • • Depth of idea development supported by elaborated, relevant details • • Logical, coherent organization • • Controlled and varied sentence structure • • Acceptable, effective language • • Few errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization relative to length and complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Establishes a purpose and maintains clear focus; strong awareness of audience; evidence of distinctive voice and/or appropriate tone • • Depth and complexity of ideas supported by rich, engaging, and/or pertinent details; evidence of analysis, reflection, insight • • Careful and/or subtle organization • • Variety in sentence structure and length enhances effect • • Precise and/or rich language • • Control of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

SCORING CRITERIA	
<p>PURPOSE/AUDIENCE: The degree to which the writer maintains a focused purpose to communicate with an audience by</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • narrowing the topic to establish a focus • • analyzing and addressing the needs of the intended audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • adhering to the characteristics (e.g., format, organization) of the form • • employing a suitable tone • • allowing a voice to emerge when appropriate
<p>IDEA DEVELOPMENT/SUPPORT: The degree to which the writer develops and supports main ideas and deepens the audience's understanding by using</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • logical, justified, and suitable explanation • • relevant elaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • related connections and reflections • • idea development strategies (e.g., bulleted lists, definitions) appropriate for the form

COMPLETE/INCOMPLETE PORTFOLIOS
<p>A portfolio is <u>incomplete</u> if it does not contain</p> <p>A Table of Contents* which indicates the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Required writing in each category Reflective (Letter to Reviewer), Personal, Literary, and Transactive ▪ Required number of pieces in each category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> 4th grade – 4 pieces 1 in each category >> 7th and 12th grade – 5 pieces 1 in each category plus 1 extra in either personal, literary, or transactive ▪ Required number of Content Pieces identified by content area class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> 4th and 7th grade – at least 1

ORGANIZATION: The degree to which the writer creates unity and coherence to accomplish the focused purpose by

- • engaging the audience and establishing a context for reading
- • placing ideas and support in a meaningful order
- • guiding the reader through the piece with transitions and transitional elements
- • providing effective closure

SENTENCES: The degree to which the writer creates effective sentences that are

- • varied in structure and length
- • constructed effectively
- • complete and correct

LANGUAGE: The degree to which the writer demonstrates

- • word choice
 - ➤ strong verbs and nouns
 - ➤ concrete and/or sensory details
 - ➤ language appropriate to the content, purpose, and audience
- • concise use of language
- • correct usage/grammar

CORRECTNESS: The degree to which the writer demonstrates

- • correct spelling
- • correct punctuation
- • correct capitalization
- • appropriate documentation of ideas and information from outside sources (e.g., citing authors or titles within the text, listing sources)

content piece other than English/language arts identified by content area class

- ➤ **12th grade** – at least 2 content pieces other than English/language arts identified by content area class

Signed Student Signature Sheet

A portfolio is also incomplete if any pieces

- • are proven to be **plagiarized**.
- • are different from those listed in the **Table of Contents**.
- • are written in a **language other than English**.
- • demonstrate **only computational skills**.
- • consist of **only diagrams or drawings**.
- • represent a **group entry**.

If a portfolio contains too many pieces, remove the first piece that may be removed without making the portfolio incomplete. Repeat this process until the portfolio contains the correct total number of pieces, the correct number of content pieces, and the correct number of pieces in each category.

***Use of the Table of Contents in the Kentucky Writing Portfolio Developmental Handbook recommended**

(<http://homepages.ius.edu/DSCHWE12/email/guide.htm>)

With these guidelines, Kentucky has established what is considered to be the basis for most states' portfolio reform. The guidelines are broad enough to allow for student development of self through choice, but narrow enough to explicitly set up expectations for all writing pieces. The portfolio assessment encourages students to write across the curriculum, to develop higher levels of writing skills—voice, style, presentation—, and to constantly improve writing. This improvement is not just for the novice or the apprentice writer, but even the best of writers is encouraged to continue to change, alter, and adapt their product to not only better their own piece, but to experiment and find what personally works. It is learning in the purest form—individualized and accountable.

But it has truly been a long process for the state of Kentucky's writing reform and still the result is not the panacea all would wish it to be. Most often the goal of establishing writing portfolios is to encourage more student writing and to improve the overall writing capabilities of students. Portfolios obviously address these goals, yet as an assessment, much like state standardized writing tests, the writing brought forth must still be judged in some valid and reliable manner. Therein lies the problem of all assessment: "If a measurement system does not produce consistent judgments among independent raters, then it cannot be valid" (Hout and Williamson 50). Therefore many question, "If all students are writing on different topics, and more importantly within different genres, how can a 'consistent judgment' be made?"

To be quite honest, it cannot easily be done, but because assessment guides like that of Kentucky address writing holistically and categorize the overall works into areas of novice, apprentice, proficient, and distinguished, writing assessment fares a better outcome. In fact, many studies indicate that when evaluating the reliability and validity of portfolio assessment, "Measures are reliable when there is evidence that portfolio contents represent an accurate picture of the program goals/objectives or other recognized standards for the profession" (Brown 7-Cited Bullock & Hawk 2001). Indeed, even when faced with the problems of reliability among evaluation crews because of the varying styles of writing, studies show "Correlations among assessors' scores are high when there is evidence for clear-cut indicators of acceptable performance (Brown 7). The findings, paired with the advantages over simplified rubric, like that of Write-On Illinois, help to prove portfolio assessment the more reliable, valid, and accountable system of writing assessment.

The first advantage of portfolio assessment over standardized testing assessment is the fact that, as already stated, each portfolio piece is judged holistically on both content and performance standards, unlike state standardized testing pieces. In addition, this indicates that the works are judged because of overall merit, not because of numbers allocated to isolated areas of evaluation. From this, a most obvious advantage is that the five- paragraph essay will no longer be the standard writing sample.

An additional advantage over state standardized testing assessment is the expectations for portfolios are already set higher in response to the demanded criteria of purpose, audience, and voice-- the five-paragraph essay does not require so much effort. The assessment also takes on a layered function, as students must assess what they have written, by compiling their best pieces; teachers must assess what students have written and help them to improve that writing, giving teachers that authority they so deserve and making them a part of the chain of evaluating events, and the state, most often in the form of teachers from other schools, assesses if the writing does indeed make the grade. So while it has already been shown that a portfolio product is obviously a better measure of student's ability to write than a state standardized test product created, it is not only the product that is better, but the assessment rubric itself also is a dramatic improvement.

But the question is still, "Does portfolio assessment really work?" The idea of such an assessment is phenomenal in theory and even looks great on paper, but can it be implemented into the educational system with such positive effects? Realistically there seems to be little research available concerning the advancements portfolio assessment has had on actual, physical student writing, possibly due to the fact that portfolio assessment as a wide-scale assessment is still in its infancy. Not only are there very few states using it as a tool of state wide assessment, but also many of those that are using it are still developing their systems. In fact, even Kentucky, the forerunning advocate of portfolio assessment is still improving its system by seeking, "increased high quality professional development, improved training materials, support for writing coaches or mentors in the schools" and requiring "very specific feedback to schools on any score changes following a writing portfolio audit, spreading writing across multiple grades, refocusing the high school portfolio, exploring accountability weights for on-demand writing and writing portfolio and reviewing standards for writing" (Kentucky Board of Education)

Yet there is still evidence that portfolio assessment is working. In 2004 Education Week, which uses more than 100 indicators to grade each state on the quality of its K-12 education system, rewarded Kentucky as one of only eight states in the nation to receive a grade of A for

its system of Assessment and Accountability and Kentucky was one of only four states to receive a grade of A in 2003 (Kentucky Board of Education). Part of this great success within the state has to do with the fact that, "Findings revealed that when a link between teaching and the required assessment portfolio was created, students' self-efficacy and performance in compiling the portfolio substantially improved, the instructor's instructional practices were better organized, students' meta-cognitive awareness of learning process was heightened, the instrumental value of course assignment increased, and students' understanding of teaching and learning as reflective acts was reinforced" (Zou 75). Kentucky's portfolio assessment is helping the state to better assess its students and to become more accountable within the nation.

Students too are voicing the positive impact portfolios have played in their educational success. In a study conducted by Morehead State University, 58% of students surveyed that had created portfolios as high school seniors "perceived the portfolio as [more of] a learning tool than a distraction" and because of the influence of portfolios, 70% felt more comfortable with writing (Mincey). Sixty six percent of the students were even heavily in favor "of the perception that preparing a high school writing portfolio had improved their writing ability, and in fact 43% of the university faculty at Morehead agreed, believing student writing had improved over the last five years (Mincey). Indeed, because of the impact of portfolios, Kentucky students are becoming writers, and not just test takers.

These positive effects have spilled over into other areas as well. Kentucky educators have come to realize that there is "much more to the evaluation (and teaching!) of good writing" (Hill 6). Because of this educators are revamping curriculums to learn how to "more effectively instruct their students in writing" (Hill 9). Educators are taking time to explore multiple writing genres and are helping students to explore tastes, talents, and pathways that would have otherwise gone unexplored. As Kentucky's assessment system has changed, the students have changed, the educators have changed, and the expectations have changed—all for the better.

Writing portfolio assessment, as a more reliable and valid form of assessment than standardized testing, has the potential to help all students become better writers. But educators

must make it happen in feasible and effective ways. Often with portfolio assessment educators take on the "get it done" mentality and view this type of reform as just another thing to do instead of as an opportunity to instigate change, not only in writing, but also in curricula, and in school dynamics. In fact, one of the biggest downfalls to portfolio assessment is the extensive amount of time it takes to not only implement it, but to oversee the process, with most often the burden falling onto English educators (Callahan 61). While it is easy to be dragged down into the quagmire of paperwork attached with portfolio assessment, implementing a district-wide or state-wide portfolio system need not overwhelm teachers and administrators. An example from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Lexington, Kentucky will demonstrate how much portfolio assessment can make positive changes within school systems:

After being involved in the Kentucky Educational Reform Act of 1989, David R. Russell, a teacher, and now a English professor at Iowa State University, saw this "get it done" point of view in his school, and it took some time before he and his fellow faculty were hit with the fact that they did not "understand that the goal of portfolio assessment, in actuality, was improving writing instruction-and learning-in all Kentucky schools by all teachers in all classes." With this new vision and goal in mind, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School determined writing portfolio assessment, and writing in general, should be a whole school process, and "all departments should be investing time, effort, and pride in the process". The school then began allocating funds for the training of teachers in how to teach writing and subsequently how to score student essays. The school's faculty began moving toward this new goal: "for all teachers to use writing as a learning tool in their classrooms." Some altered curriculums and made writing a part of the courses, not just as added-on writing assignments. Teachers in all disciplines began to see writing as a tool for learning—"not only demonstrating learning for assessment, but also for making a connection between curriculum and the worlds of writing students will enter after secondary school" (Moore and Russell). David Russell's example illustrates the power portfolio assessment can have if implemented properly. It took time, money, and most of all effort and teamwork. Portfolio assessment cannot be a process entered into lightly, but must act as one

segment of massive educational reform involving teachers in all subject areas. (Moore and Russell)

But David Russell's example brings us back again to one key problem associated with portfolio assessment—cost—or Money: Money for training, money for time, and money for assessment. The big question is always, "How are we going to pay for this?" The state legislation has already once eliminated the current form of writing assessment because of money, so why should they further instate a new form of assessment that will cost them more? We all know the answer to this question-- educators, administrators, parents, and even the state legislation knows. The answer is that we must make writing a priority for our children and our future. It is a harsh reality how many occupations require writing in some manner, some form, and not always a five-paragraph form. Amazingly, portfolio assessment addresses all of these genres state standardized testing never addressed: lab reports created by future doctors, nurses, or scientists, letters to the editor from future writers, parents, or concerned community members, complaint letters for malpractice, billing errors, or product failure from the everyday man or woman. Yet instead of asking what good writing does for our society, the question has become what it will cost instead.

Assuming state legislation ensures the funds allocated to writing assessment, the cost of implementing such a portfolio program would be approximately \$1.12 per pupil ("Making Statewide Writing Assessment..." 23). Based on the overall number of Illinois students, this would indeed be a substantial investment, and one that it is difficult to ascertain the overall impact on the states' finances. Currently, per pupil spending in Illinois ranges from \$4,000-\$15,000, depending on where a student lives (Van Winkle). The mentioning of such staggering figures is not meant to advocate a reduction in the funding gap between Illinois districts, as that is an entirely different issue, but to illustrate that some form of redistribution of funding could make portfolio assessment a possibility across the state. But even if this financial suggestion does not seem feasible, there are other options. The state could redirect current assessment funds directed toward out-of-state contractors and make Illinois an in-house assessment project

("Making Statewide Writing Assessment..." 23). Currently 91% of the state's assessment budget is spent in other states, but "by redirecting this money, we can be sure that what little money is available for assessment in Illinois is spent in a way that directly benefits the students of Illinois" ("Making Statewide Writing Assessment..." 23). In addition, should this portfolio assessment be kept within districts or used across districts, as two or more districts switch student products to evaluate one another's products, professional development time and CPDUs could be earned. In fact, for those districts that set aside funds for these areas, the money could be used two-fold—assessment and development.

The state's educational budget is an intricate web, connecting district to district, all parts building and relying on one another. And much like a spider's web, I cannot claim to understand all of the complexities that create it (the state's budget), and keep it together. I do know, however, that when one portion of a web is torn down, it must be rebuilt, no matter the cost. When the state legislation chose to eliminate the assessment of writing, they tore down a part of the state's foundational web of education. In reinstating writing as a portion of the state standardized test the legislation has begun the repair, but it must now be rebuilt, stronger than before—portfolio assessment must be a part of that new foundation. The money to support this new lifeline is there, funds just need to be redistributed and redirected for the sake of our state's children. Our children deserve it.

The following is a chart that the ISPAW team, or the Illinois Statewide Portfolio Assessment of Writing team, created to adeptly and succinctly demonstrate the most beneficial aspects of implementing a portfolio assessment for the state of Illinois. Its advantages over either having a state standardized writing test or of having absolutely no form of writing assessment at all are obvious. It not only points out how the state's children will be better empowered with exceptional writing skills, but indicates that such a new system of assessment will finally address the state's standards, doing what those in the educational system want it to do, and over time it will even benefit the state's tax system, doing what the government wants it to do. It is a win-win situation for students, teachers, administrators, and legislators.

Feature of the Proposed Assessment System	Benefits
Portfolio Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Provides for a more rigorous and comprehensive assessment *Assesses Illinois State Learning Standards 3 and 5 *Assesses writing over a longer period of time *Assesses multiple writing tasks for multiple audiences *Assesses writing processes, including prewriting, drafting, revision, response, research, and reflection *Students exercise a greater degree of freedom in choosing topics to write about; students can find diverse paths of success *More valid assessment: corresponds to best classroom practices and Illinois Learning Standards
Assessment by Illinois Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Tax money spend on the current assessment will no longer go to out-of-state corporations *Illinois tax money will directly benefit Illinois Students *Illinois teachers will receive opportunities for meaningful and enriching professional development opportunities through participation in the portfolio assessment system
Norming process at State Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Will ensure that Illinois students are meeting the Illinois State Learning Standards *Will ensure that local school districts are providing strong instruction in writing *Will ensure that local school districts are evaluating student writing according to standards established statewide

("Making Statewide Writing Assessment Rigorous, Valid, and Fair")

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The current form of writing assessment must be changed. Teachers must be given back the power of education instead of allowing testing to drive what and how disciplines are being taught. Such a drastic change will require full systematic alterations, meaning the entire educational system must transform to accommodate the needs of today's society—specifically the need to better communicate with the world beyond high school. These changes seem to best be met through the advancement of portfolio assessment where writing becomes cross-curricular, driving the entire educational system to not only support writing, but encourage the writing process and true writing skills. This requires qualified educators from all subject areas working

together in an effort to teach students how to express and communicate themselves in any situation that may arise. It involves teaching writing for writing's sake and not just for assessment (This is not to say works should not be assessed, as they should, but assessment should not be the driving force for what is being written or how a piece is being written). This change within the system also involves using assessment as a tool to teach students where they went right and wrong in their writing and what they can do better next time, giving them true feedback and responses from which they can learn. The system must help to make learning more individualized, as students create and develop writing products that express themselves, and do not simply regurgitate what is needed to score on a test. The current system of assessment cannot do such things, and realistically does not require students to improve their writing skills, but simply teaches children how to format their words. The current system of writing assessment cannot do what portfolio assessment will; it is the future of communication assessment.

And while portfolio assessment may take more time, money, and training than state standardized testing, the result, truly good and representative writing, speaks for itself. This is not to say portfolio assessment is the utopian world for good writing, because it is not. It too must maintain the flexibility to change and grow with students, educational systems, and even society, a flexibility that standardized testing cannot support (Estrem 127). Portfolio assessment must not be allowed to grow stagnant or even formulaic in its expectations, but must, instead, expect the best from student writing, overall educational instruction, state resources, and national backing. With these levels all in working order, accountability will automatically occur and true learning will take place. Students will learn to write well and to communicate better. Students will learn to find their true voices, and better yet, learn how to express them.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

When the Illinois State Legislation made the decision to dismiss the writing portion of the state standardized test, I did not mourn for the loss. In fact, I thought that it would possibly be

the end of my students asking me if their essays had to be five paragraphs. Granted, I knew that the expectation of the five-paragraph essay would take years to get out of students' heads because it has been so embedded into our society, especially those of us in the state of Illinois. However, when the dismissal was made I did acquire a heavy heart because the action was not done for the students, not for the teachers, and not even for the good of writing. The decision was purely based on money—in a time where as a society we are searching for ways to make everyone accountable, where is the accountability of legislation and the state for this action? I personally feel it necessary to question how important the state feels its children are when such decisions are made without any regard to the impact on the state's educational well-being.

But this accountability could be argued forever, so the only word that must then be considered is "change." This signifies change in the goals of legislation, change in the school systems, and change in testing procedures. Sadly enough though, while it has been proven that portfolio assessment is the most reliable, valid, and beneficial method of creating and evaluating student writing, its implementation into the state of Illinois may never become a reality because of a lack of educational funding allotted by the state. But we must remember, students deserve the best of all aspects of the educational system, and in order for it to be the best and offer the best, massive reform must take place, especially in the area of writing. As it has been demonstrated, the writing process is as important as any product because it is through this process that students actualize and internalize learning- the point of an education. After all, "learning to write is not a matter of passing tests, but is a life long process" (Smith 287) and writing is not meant to be formulaic and systematic, but free, thought provoking, and expressive. Students should be evaluated on products that typify their abilities and not one isolated writing experience. Portfolio assessment is one method that will allow this to take place. It will change the face of all school systems, ensuring that writing is focused on across the curriculum. It will change the manner in which student writing is developed and surpass any end product state standardized testing could have ever created. Hopefully the Illinois Statewide Portfolio Assessment of Writing team advocating the change to portfolio assessment will be allowed to see

their portfolio assessment project become a reality in the near future and be successful enough to prove to our educational system, and to our legislature, that portfolio assessment is indeed the next necessary step for our state to take in order to make sure we do not leave any children behind. While reform will not be easy, it is something that must take place for the best of students today and tomorrow. Learning to write well is an asset that every child deserves to learn how to do. It does not take a form or a formula, but only one individual to come up with something he or she feels is worth writing about.

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APPENDIX A

STATE WRITING ASSESSMENT SURVEY

State Writing Assessment Survey

Dear Educator,

As an Illinois English educator of seven years, I am currently conducting a survey for my graduate thesis at Eastern Illinois University concerning Illinois State Testing practices for the English and writing domains. While I know the state of Illinois has currently dismissed use of some standardized writing tests, it is reasonable to speculate that some form of assessment will be adopted in the future. Therefore, it is my goal to determine what type of impact these tests have on educators, their teaching practices, and their students.

The beginning of the survey asks for demographic information, but does not request your school's name or your personal name. The information supplied will in no manner be connected to individuals or to their schools-- All subjects requested to answer this survey have been randomly selected.

While many questions require only a rated response, the area directly following each question labeled "Comments" allows you to expand or clarify your answer. These comments will add greatly to my survey results and are appreciated, but not necessary for the completion of the survey.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could complete the attached survey by Feb. 25, 2005. I am depending on Illinois teachers like you to tell me their feelings about state testing-- don't go unheard.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Tracy Wright
Neoga Jr. Sr. High School Teacher
Eastern Illinois Graduate Student

What is the approximate number of students within your school?

What is the approximate number of English faculty within your school?

Does your school use high-stakes testing practices (scores determining promotion, graduation, placement, etc)? Yes or No

Does your school use any type of portfolio assessment? Yes or No

[Empty text box]

If so, please briefly describe in what manner the portfolio assessment is used.

[Empty text box]

The writing portion of the ISAT/PSAE uses prompts that all students can work from.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strong Disagree

Comments:

[Empty text box]

It would be impossible to grade most ISAT and other standardized writing responses within sixty seconds.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

[Empty text box]

The writing portion of ISAT/PSAE is a valid test that truly shows how well a student can perform writing tasks.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strong Disagree

Comments:

--	--

Results of the my students' writing portion of ISAT/PSAE testing reflected my expectations of the students. Typically student scores were what I anticipated they would be.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

--	--

ISAT/PSAE testing allows an ample amount of time for students to create good writing samples

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

--	--

I feel significant pressure to unrealistically raise scores.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

--	--

It is appropriate to use test results to evaluate teachers/administration.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

--	--

It is appropriate to use test scores exclusively to promote or retain students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

Strongly Disagree

Comments:

I spend an ample amount of time teaching creative writing in my classroom.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

When completing writing projects for my class, students are encouraged to see writing as a process, with editing and revision always included.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

I use test preparation materials developed commercially or by the state to help improve scores on standardized testing.

- Strongly Agree (I use many)
- Agree (I use some)

- Undecided
 Disagree (I have used some)
 Strongly Disagree (I have never used them)
-

Comments:

I believe ISAT/PSAE testing adequately takes into consideration the logic, coherence, and overall quality of a student's writing during evaluation.

- Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Undecided
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
-

Comments:

The decision for Illinois to discontinue the writing portion of ISAT beginning in 2005 is the correct move for the state to make.

- Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Undecided
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
-

Comments:

With the decision to discontinue the writing portion of ISAT, Illinois educators will minimize the teaching of writing to focus on other testing areas, such as reading.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

--	--

When Illinois tested writing, ISAT required writing for a variety of "audiences". Similarly, the PSAE currently requires writing for a variety of "audiences."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

--	--

When Illinois tested writing, ISAT required writing for a variety of "purposes." Similarly, the PSAE currently does require writing for a variety of "purposes."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

--	--

When Illinois tested writing, ISAT focused adequately on "grammar, spelling, and punctuation." Similarly, the PSAE currently focuses adequately on "grammar, spelling, and punctuation."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Comments:

||
||

Please answer the following questions as completely and honestly as you can.

How do you feel ISAT/PSAE testing affects student writing?

||
||

How does your classroom prepare for ISAT/PSAE testing and how much time does this require?

||
||

What are your biggest complaints about standardized writing tests?

||
||

What are your feelings about the five paragraph essay?

Are there better methods of assessment than standardized writing testing? If so, what are they?

Should Illinois require state standardized testing in the area of writing?

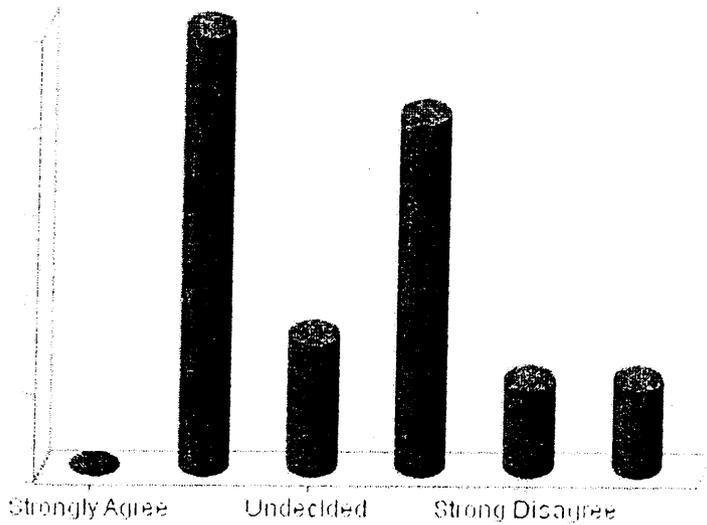
I appreciate your time. Thanks for responding.

Submit

APPENDIX B

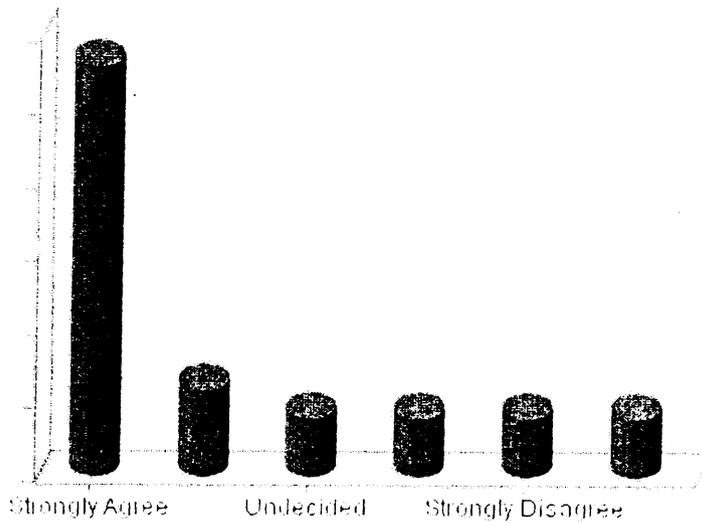
SUMMARY OF THE STATE WRITING
ASSESSMENT SURVEY

The writing portion of the ISAT/PSAE uses prompts that all students can work from.



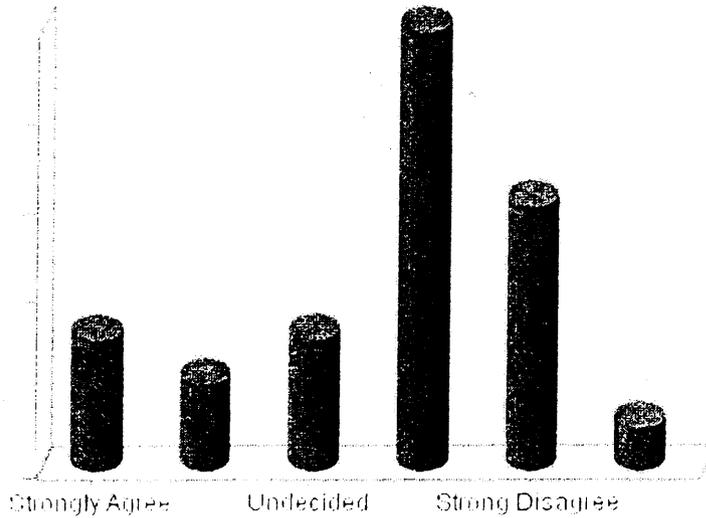
Percent	Total	Answer
0.00%		Strongly Agree
40.00%		Agree
12.00%		Undecided
32.00%		Disagree
8.00%		Strong Disagree
8.00%		No Answer

It would be impossible to grade most ISAT and other standardized writing responses within sixty seconds.



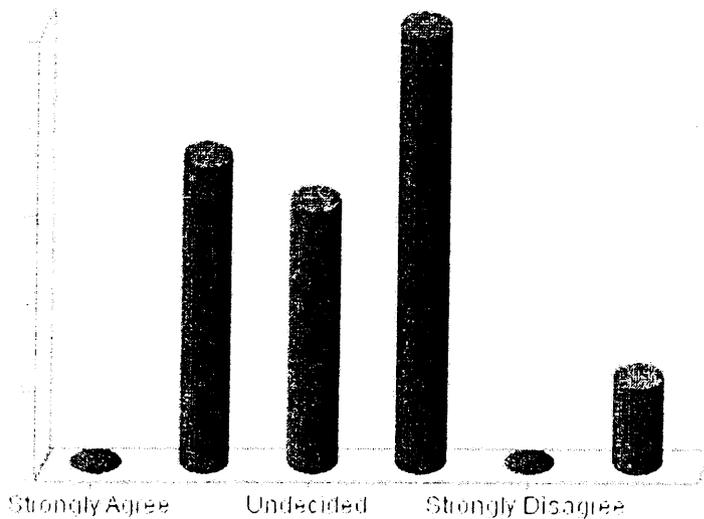
Percent	Total	Answer
56.00%		Strongly Agree
12.00%		Agree
8.00%		Undecided
8.00%		Disagree
8.00%		Strongly Disagree
8.00%		No Answer

The writing portion of ISAT/PSAE is a valid test that truly shows how well a student can perform writing tasks.



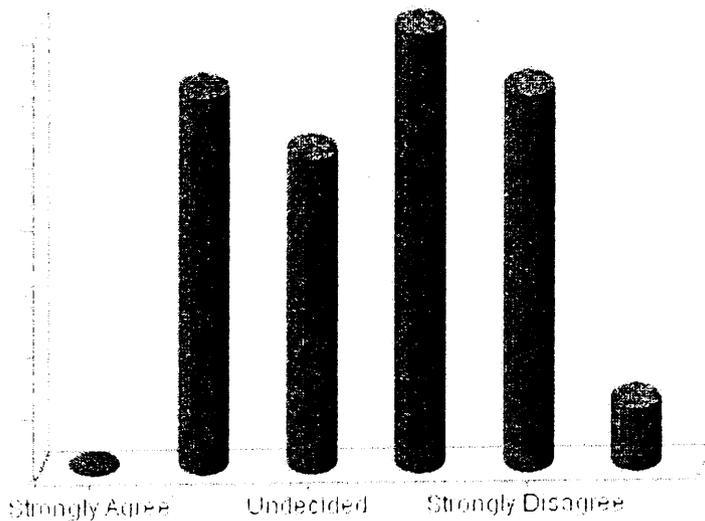
Percent	Total	Answer
12.00%		Strongly Agree
8.00%		Agree
12.00%		Undecided
40.00%		Disagree
24.00%		Strong Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

Results of the my students' writing portion of ISAT/PSAE testing reflected my expectations of the students. Typically student scores were what I anticipated they would be.



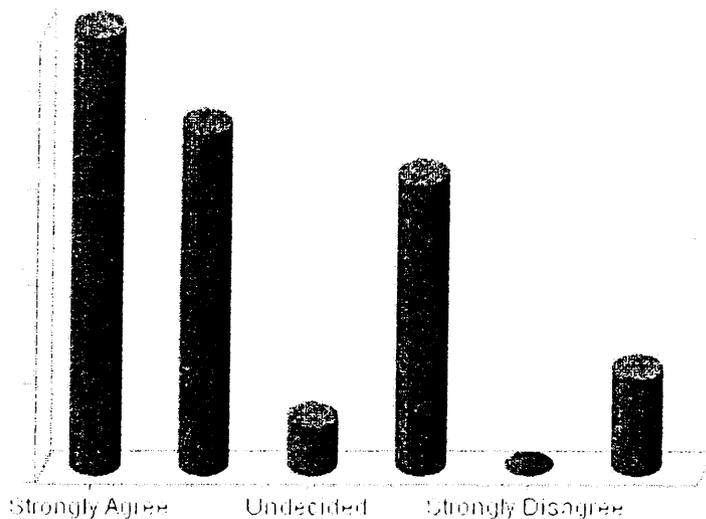
Percent	Total	Answer
0.00%		Strongly Agree
28.00%		Agree
24.00%		Undecided
40.00%		Disagree
0.00%		Strongly Disagree
8.00%		No Answer

ISAT/PSAE testing allows an ample amount of time for students to create good writing samples



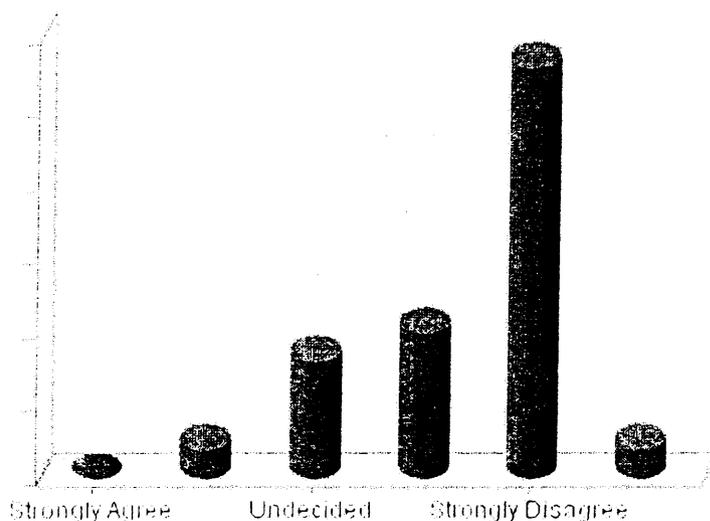
Percent Total	Answer
0.00%	Strongly Agree
24.00%	Agree
20.00%	Undecided
28.00%	Disagree
24.00%	Strongly Disagree
4.00%	No Answer

I feel significant pressure to unrealistically raise scores.



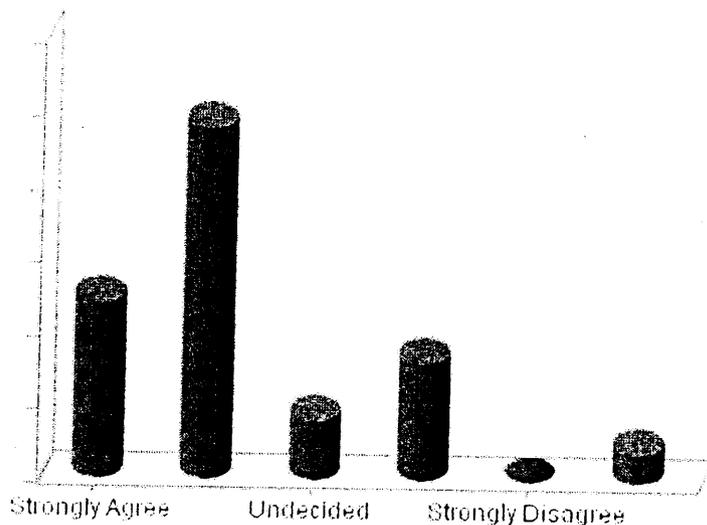
Percent Total	Answer
36.00%	Strongly Agree
28.00%	Agree
4.00%	Undecided
24.00%	Disagree
0.00%	Strongly Disagree
8.00%	No Answer

It is appropriate to use test results to evaluate teachers/administration.



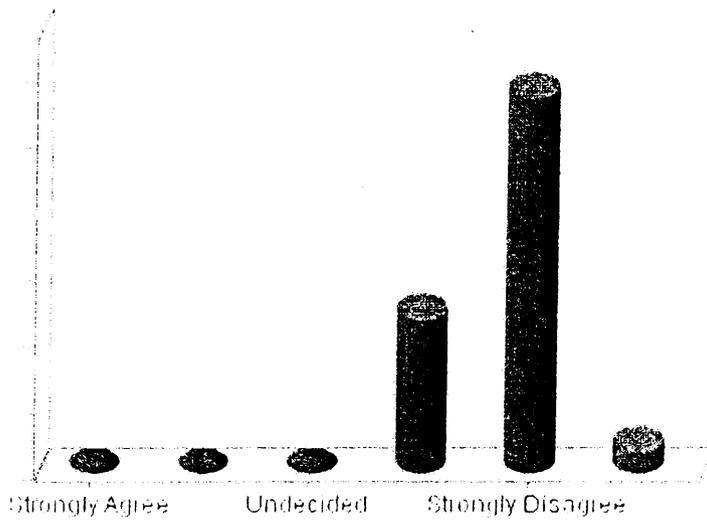
Percent	Total	Answer
0.00%		Strongly Agree
4.00%		Agree
16.00%		Undecided
20.00%		Disagree
56.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

Focusing on ISAT/PSAE testing has decreased the time spent on instruction in non-tested areas.



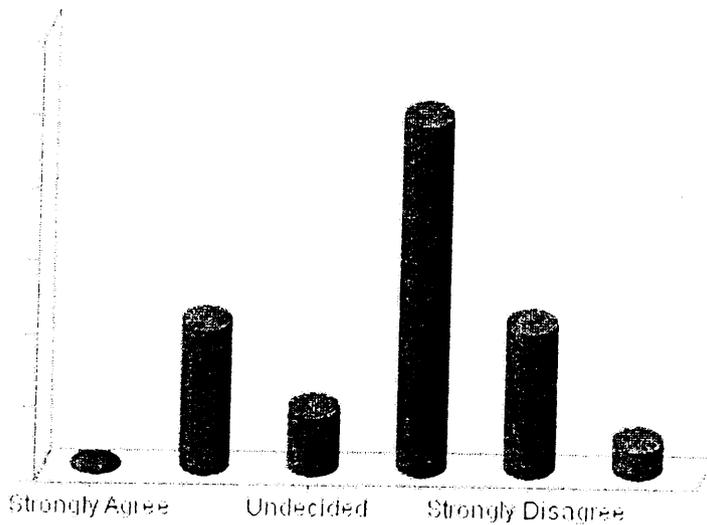
Percent	Total	Answer
24.00%		Strongly Agree
48.00%		Agree
8.00%		Undecided
16.00%		Disagree
0.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

No Child Left Behind is realistic in its goals and expectations.



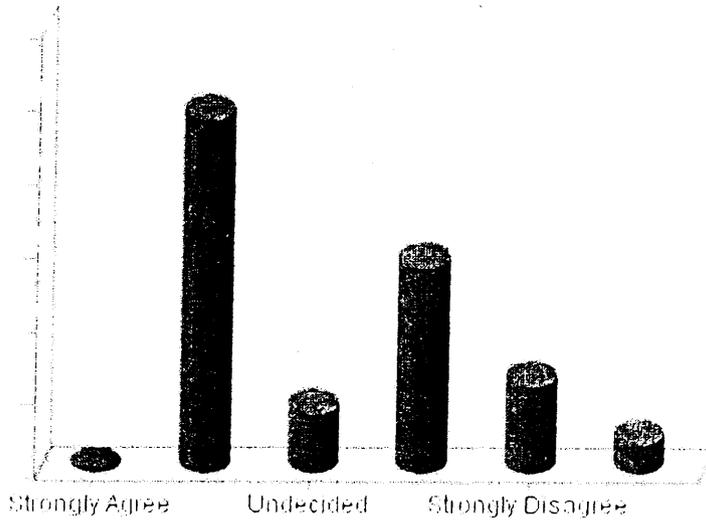
Percent Total	Answer
0.00%	Strongly Agree
0.00%	Agree
0.00%	Undecided
28.00%	Disagree
68.00%	Strongly Disagree
4.00%	No Answer

ISAT/PSAE testing does NOT affect what I teach.



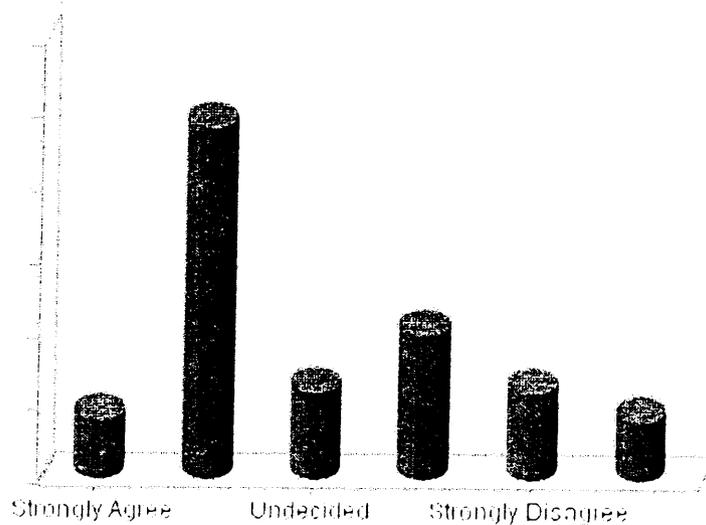
Percent Total	Answer
0.00%	Strongly Agree
20.00%	Agree
8.00%	Undecided
48.00%	Disagree
20.00%	Strongly Disagree
4.00%	No Answer

ISAT/PSAE testing does NOT affect how I teach.



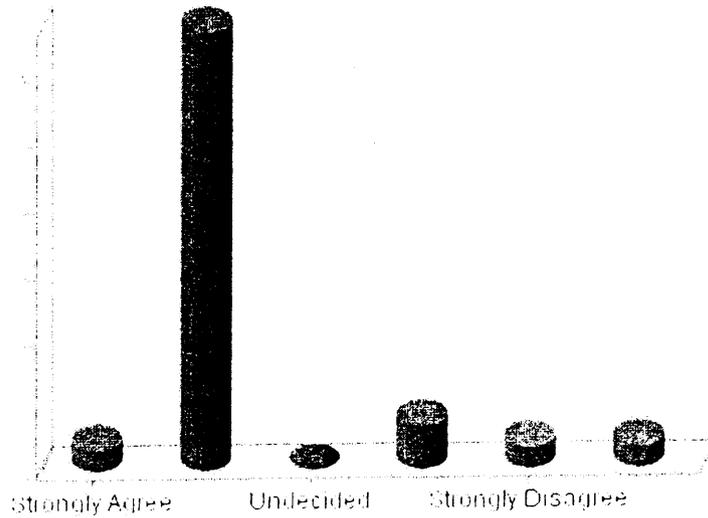
Percent Total	Answer
0.00%	Strongly Agree
48.00%	Agree
8.00%	Undecided
28.00%	Disagree
12.00%	Strongly Disagree
4.00%	No Answer

Teaching the five-paragraph essay is the best manner to prepare for standardized writing tests.



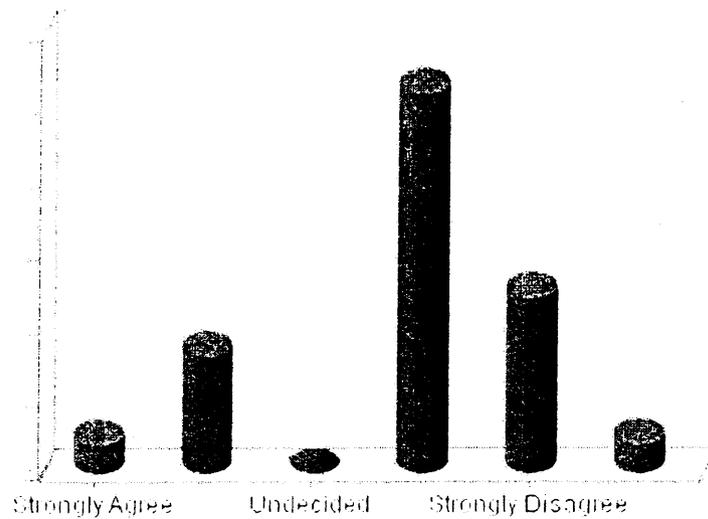
Percent Total	Answer
8.00%	Strongly Agree
48.00%	Agree
12.00%	Undecided
20.00%	Disagree
12.00%	Strongly Disagree
8.00%	No Answer

The five-paragraph essay is an acceptable form of writing.



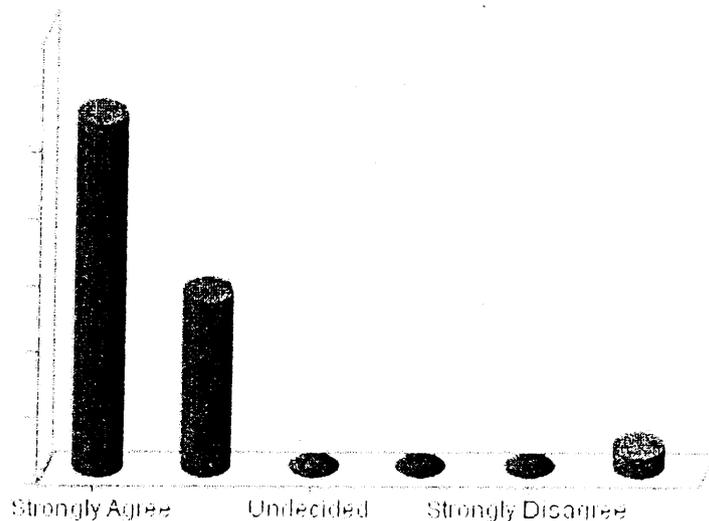
Percent	Total	Answer
4.00%		Strongly Agree
80.00%		Agree
0.00%		Undecided
8.00%		Disagree
4.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

I spend an ample amount of time teaching creative writing in my classroom.



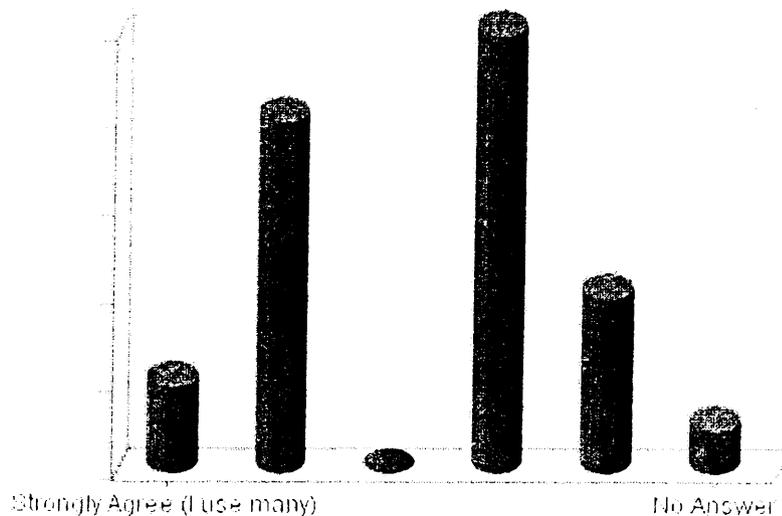
Percent	Total	Answer
4.00%		Strongly Agree
16.00%		Agree
0.00%		Undecided
52.00%		Disagree
24.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

When completing writing projects for my class, students are encouraged to see writing as a process, with editing and revision always included.



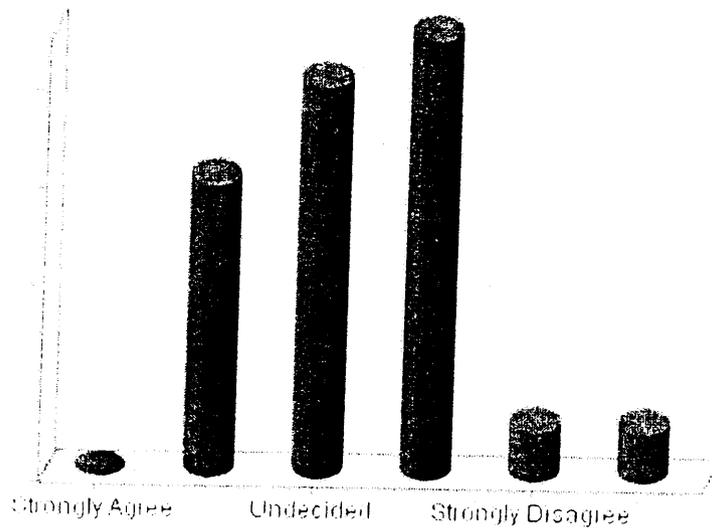
Percent Total	Answer
64.00%	Strongly Agree
32.00%	Agree
0.00%	Undecided
0.00%	Disagree
0.00%	Strongly Disagree
4.00%	No Answer

I use test preparation materials developed commercially or by the state to help improve scores on standardized testing.



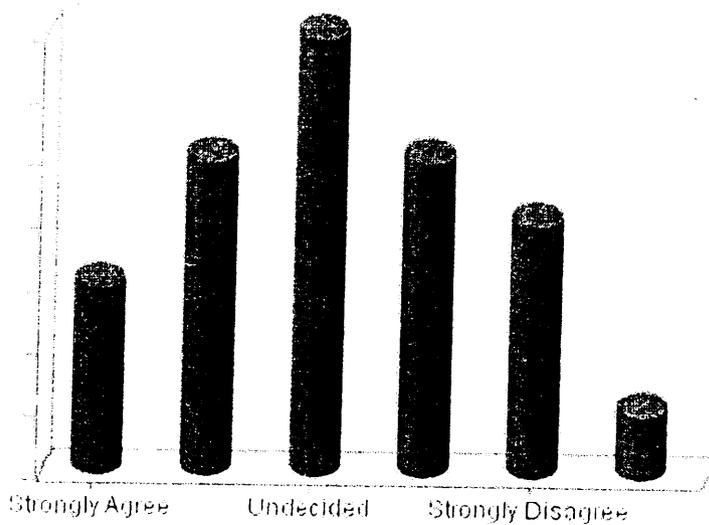
Percent Total	Answer
8.00%	Strongly Agree (I use many)
32.00%	Agree (I use some)
0.00%	Undecided
40.00%	Disagree (I have used some)
16.00%	Strongly Disagree (I have never used them)
4.00%	No Answer

I believe ISAT/PSAE testing adequately takes into consideration the logic, coherence, and overall quality of a student's writing during evaluation.



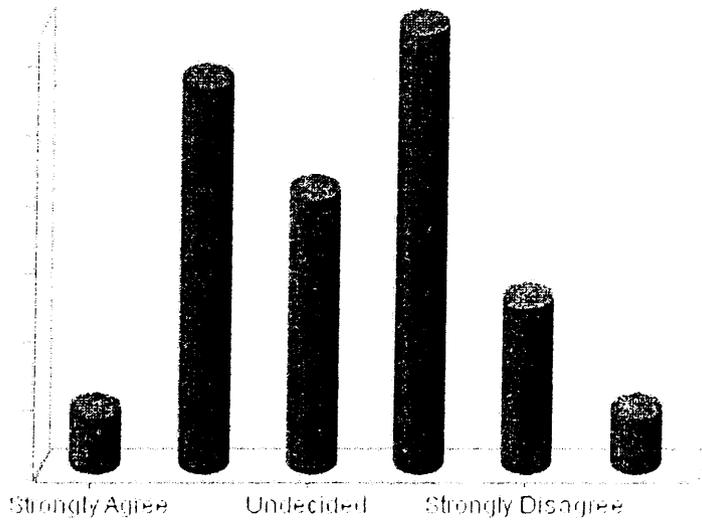
Percent	Total	Answer
0.00%		Strongly Agree
24.00%		Agree
32.00%		Undecided
36.00%		Disagree
4.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

The decision for Illinois to discontinue the writing portion of ISAT beginning in 2005 is the correct move for the state to make.



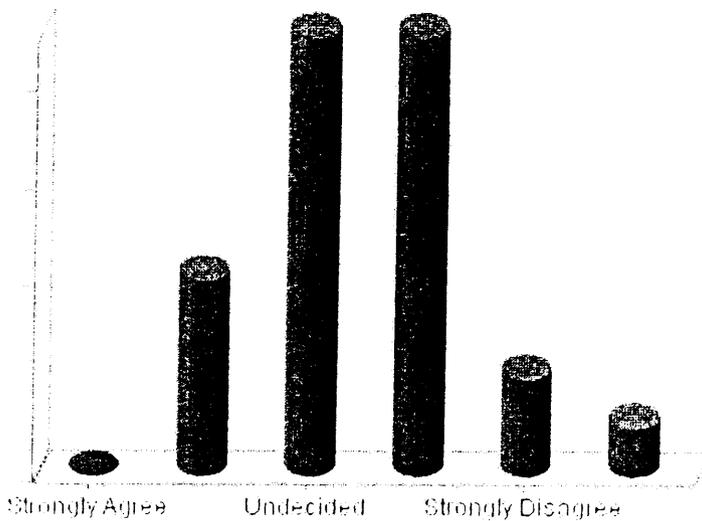
Percent	Total	Answer
12.00%		Strongly Agree
20.00%		Agree
28.00%		Undecided
20.00%		Disagree
16.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

With the decision to discontinue the writing portion of ISAT, Illinois educators will minimize the teaching of writing to focus on other testing areas, such as reading.



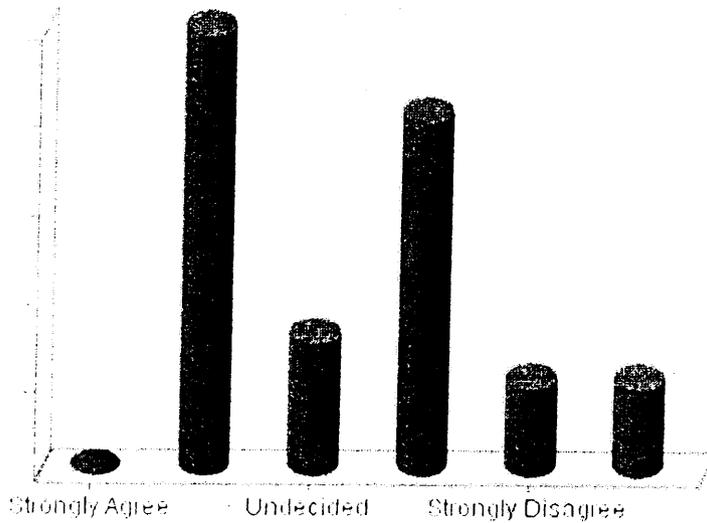
Percent	Total	Answer
4.00%		Strongly Agree
28.00%		Agree
20.00%		Undecided
32.00%		Disagree
12.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

When Illinois tested writing, ISAT required writing for a variety of "audiences". Similarly, the PSAE currently requires writing for a variety of "audiences."



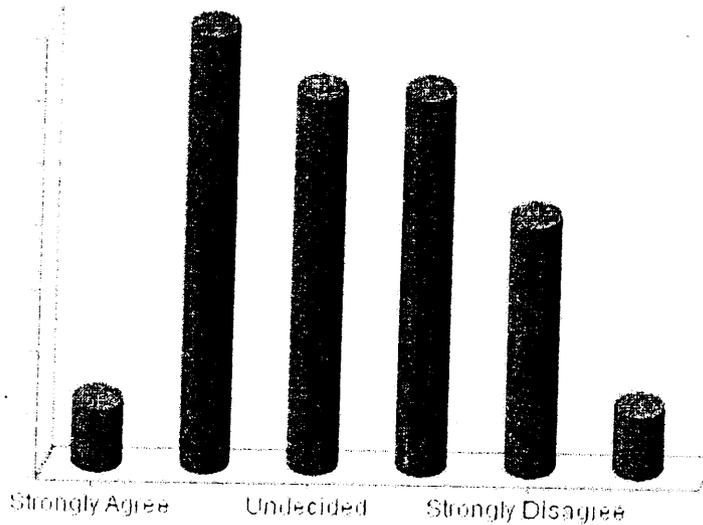
Percent	Total	Answer
0.00%		Strongly Agree
16.00%		Agree
36.00%		Undecided
36.00%		Disagree
8.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer

When Illinois tested writing, ISAT required writing for a variety of "purposes." Similarly, the PSAE currently does require writing for a variety of "purposes."



Percent	Total	Answer
0.00%		Strongly Agree
40.00%		Agree
12.00%		Undecided
32.00%		Disagree
8.00%		Strongly Disagree
8.00%		No Answer

When Illinois tested writing, ISAT focused adequately on "grammar, spelling, and punctuation." Similarly, the PSAE currently focuses adequately on "grammar, spelling, and punctuation."



Percent	Total	Answer
4.00%		Strongly Agree
28.00%		Agree
24.00%		Undecided
24.00%		Disagree
16.00%		Strongly Disagree
4.00%		No Answer