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Teaching to the test...not!

Balancing best practice and testing requirements in writing

High-quality, evidence-based instruction need not be sacrificed in preparing students to succeed on standardized writing assessments.

Literacy assessment should be about student learning, but high-stakes testing has largely supplanted literacy assessment in the United States. The focus is now on accountability rather than the diagnosis of learning for instructional purposes (Campbell, 2002). There are several drawbacks to this shift in focus and to the prevalence of these tests. Decisions about promotion or retention are attached to student success or failure on some state-mandated tests (Traub, 2002). In some states, students do not receive a diploma or receive one of lesser stature if they do not pass the state exit test.

High-stakes standardized testing can greatly influence the teaching of reading and writing. Many teachers change their literacy curricula in order to train students to take the test (Harman, 2000), and standardized tests drive the curricula in many states (Falk, 1998). Rather than focusing on meaningful learning experiences, many schools spend a lot of time preparing students to take state assessments by engaging them in test-like activities (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985). Barrentine (1999) stated, “Teachers are falling into line and teaching to the test not because they agree with instruction that is driven by standardized testing, but because the consequences of low test scores are so great” (p. 5).

This change—from teaching for learning to teaching for the test—results in a narrowing of the curriculum, loss of instructional time, and loss of teacher autonomy (Campbell, 2002; Vacca & Vacca, 2001). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; 2002) reinforced the emphasis on accountability and the use of test scores to make critical decisions about the academic future of children. Critics of NCLB fear that, like high-stakes testing, this legislation will exacerbate the problems that result when teachers explicitly teach to the test. Mathews (2004) contended that “opportunities for combining fun and learning [are] being squeezed out by test preparation” (p. 2). Instructional time is spent practicing for the test, while important and challenging topics and activities are dropped from the curriculum.

Can best practices and the demands of mandated testing truly coexist? Fletcher (2001) asserted that students can perform admirably on formalized writing tests with instruction based on best practices rather than explicit teaching to the test. This instruction should include teaching students to write in a variety of genres, providing time for writing and revising, allowing students to write on their choice of topics, encouraging creativity, and incorporating writing conventions—all aspects of writing workshop, and the writing process. Students who have effective writing instruction score better on state writing tests than their counterparts who receive specific instruction in the skills assessed on the test (Manzo, 2001). According to Tchudi and Tchudi (1999), the broadest and richest preparation in writing produces the highest test scores.

They also found that narrow test preparation does not necessarily produce the kind of writing that will be useful to students. Manzo further suggested that rather than spending time on test preparation, writing should be ongoing. According to Falk (1998), “Teaching and assessment are supported best when skills are combined with higher order thinking embedded in content and applied to real-world situations” (p. 58).

Best practice for test preparation

The purpose of this article is to discuss how using best practices found in writing workshop and the writing process (Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1983), the 6 + 1 Traits writing (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004), and modes of writing (Cooper & Kiger, 2003) can accomplish two goals: Students write creatively and communicatively, *and* they pass all necessary standardized tests in writing. We have chosen these instructional approaches because they share three aspects found in effective writing instruction:

- attention to the social nature of language (Vygotsky, 1978);
- recognition of the importance of a student-centered focus (Moffett, 1983); and
- use of developmentally appropriate practices (Jalongo, 2003).

The underpinnings of this article are (a) that learning is constructed as students are given a variety of experiences, ideas, and relationships with peers and teachers, and (b) that this learning allows students to become better writers, which results in better scores on formalized writing tests. We hope that our descriptions of writing workshop, the writing process, 6 + 1 Traits, modes of writing, and the supporting evidence presented raise awareness about how these approaches can help student writers across all grade levels. These approaches not only enable students to acquire skills needed to perform well on the high-stakes tests they are required to pass but, more important, they also help them to become more effective writers. After all, assessment is a component of instruction and not an end unto itself. Assessment should help the teacher learn about individual strengths and needs

of students for the purpose of instruction. The goal of instruction is to produce lifelong learners, not test takers.

Instructional approaches

Writing workshop and the writing process

Choice, time, and response or feedback are important elements in teaching children to write effectively (Atwell, 1987; Routman, 1994; Wood & Dickinson, 2000). In order to create interest and promote ownership of their writing, students need to be able to choose the topic and genre (Bright, 1995). In addition, they require time at school to write and work in partnership with their peers and teachers who offer genuine, interested responses to their writing (Calkins, 1983; Cambourne, 1995). The writing workshop model (Atwell; Graves, 1983) incorporates these elements. Cooper and Kiger (2003) described writing workshop as “a flexible plan that places students and teacher in a partnership for learning” (p. 442).

The components of writing workshop are minilessons, status-of-the-class reports, writing and conferring time, and group sharing (Atwell, 1987):

1. Minilessons—Concise lessons that focus on one specific skill, strategy, or procedure. They usually last 10 to 15 minutes and can occur any time during writing workshop.
2. Status of the class reports—Quick teacher surveys of what each student does in writing workshop, usually recorded on a checklist.
3. Writing and conferring time—The core of writing workshop, the time when students write at various stages of the writing process and engage in conferences with peers and teacher.
4. Group sharing—The time at the end of writing workshop when the whole class reacts to an individual’s writing.

Briefly, in writing workshop, students first select topics, engage in prewriting activities, and begin drafts. Peers and teachers confer with writers and offer suggestions for revision and editing. Sharing comes at the end of each writing workshop

as work is read and discussed for additional responses in a large-group setting. Direct instruction in the form of minilessons about revising and editing can occur at any point within the writing workshop.

During the workshop, students use components of the writing process as they write for a variety of purposes and in a variety of modes. This enables students to take charge of their own writing and work with components that are interwoven and occur simultaneously and continually. In current literature, these components are identified in various ways and differ in number. For instance, Flower and Hayes (1981; Hayes & Flower, 1986) identified three components: planning, translating, and reviewing. Atwell (1987) and Cooper and Kiger (2003) identified five components:

1. Prewriting and planning—Students choose topics, set goals, produce ideas, and develop a writing plan. Planning is not a one-time event in the process. New ideas are generated as writers compose, and writers may alter or change the goals they set previously.
2. Drafting—Students write without interruption and without undue attention to correctness or mechanics.
3. Revising—Changes are made in the writing. Ideas are elaborated to make the writing more detailed and interesting. Peer and teacher conferences are used to help with this process.
4. Editing—Students correct the paper for spelling, punctuation, and other writing conventions. Peer and teacher conferences help with this task.
5. Publishing—Students publish the writing piece in some way, such as by making a book or simply typing it on the computer.

6 + 1 Traits

This analytic scoring system for writing was created by teachers in the early 1980s as they developed a better way to get information about student writing performance than could be obtained from a single standardized test score. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) used these components as the foundation for their writing assessment model and as a basis for descriptive

criteria to define the qualities of good writing. According to NWREL (2004), six key qualities define strong writing. (The “+ 1”—presentation, or the look of the writing on the page—will not be discussed in this article.)

1. Ideas—The idea or purpose of the message is clearly conveyed with necessary information.
2. Organization—The internal structure of the writing.
3. Voice—The personal tone and style of the writer.
4. Word choice—Words the author chooses in order to get the meaning across.
5. Sentence fluency—the flow of the language.
6. Conventions—Mechanical correctness.

Through 6 + 1 Traits, assessment is integrated with the writing curriculum as a tool for revision. Students are taught in minilessons to assess their writing in terms of the 6 + 1 Traits and to make revisions accordingly. These traits provide the language needed to teach students what to revise, and through instruction students learn how to do so. 6 + 1 Traits fit naturally into the writing process as they make teaching writing more focused and purposeful.

Modes of writing

Cooper and Kiger's (2003) modes of writing instructional routines (write-aloud, shared writing, guided writing, collaborative/cooperative writing) and independent writing reflect the relationship between the amount of teacher support and student independence during writing time. The concept for the instructional routines is based on Pearson's (1985) idea of gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student. Three of these modes can be used within the minilesson format as writers move from dependence on the teacher to independent writing.

1. Write-aloud—Teachers model the thinking process that happens during writing and verbalize that process while writing on a chart or overhead transparency.
2. Shared writing—The group or class writes together, working with the teacher.

3. Guided writing—Students write their own products as the teacher prompts and guides.

These three modes of writing can be combined; for instance, teachers might begin writing as a write-aloud, move to shared writing, and then to guided writing. The modes of writing used vary depending upon students' needs and development. Through modes of writing, teachers can demonstrate writers' craft (Wolf & Wolf, 2002) as they teach the genres of writing that are commonly required on assessments. In learning these genres, students develop a repertoire to choose from as they respond to prompts on tests or as they write during writing workshop.

Research investigations

Several studies focus on writing workshop, the writing process, and 6 + 1 Traits. As far as we could ascertain from a review of the literature, no research studies have been done on the modes of writing. Perhaps this is an area for further research.

Writing workshop and the writing process

The seminal research of Flower and Hayes (1981) clearly supports the use of the writing process in the classroom. Their work defined writing as a cognitive process and illustrated connections among thinking, learning, and writing. A cognitive process theory resulting from their research is grounded on four key points (Flower & Hayes, p. 366):

1. The process of writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes that writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing.
2. These processes have a hierarchical, highly embedded organization in which any given process can be embedded within any other.
3. The act of composing is a goal-directed thinking process, guided by the writer's own growing network of goals.
4. Writers create their goals in two key ways: by generating high-level goals and supporting subgoals that embody the writer's developing sense of purpose and then, at times, by changing major goals or even establish-

ing entirely new ones based on what has been learned in the act of writing.

The work of Flower and Hayes (1981) contributes to the understanding that writing is a recursive process in which writers continually plan and revise—not in separate, discrete stages, but as they compose. Implications for instruction include teacher intervention in the writing process in order to teach students what to do as they write. In addition, this theory moves teachers from just giving and correcting writing assignments to teaching how to write.

Traditional test preparation for writing is somewhat formulaic in that students are taught to write the conventional five-paragraph essay. This kind of preparation is product-oriented instruction, and the product is a piece of writing that will be judged by an unknown audience as to whether certain test standards are met. According to Wolf and Wolf (2002), “Driven by state testing, teachers are being pulled toward prompt-and-rubric teaching that bypasses the human act of composing and the human gesture of response” (p. 230). Conversely, process-oriented instruction encompasses “the human act of composing” and “the human gesture of response,” thus preparing students to meet writing requirements for any purposes they may encounter throughout their lives.

In their interviews with nine third-grade students who were involved in a writing workshop, Fu and Lamme (2002) found that time, choice, and response were important. The students viewed themselves as writers and enjoyed writing because they were given a choice of writing topics and time to write. Sharing writing with others in conferences provided the motivation the students needed to write and learn how to improve their writing. Some of the students were able to identify ways that they had improved in their writing from one year to the next. The writing workshop provides an environment in which students use cognitive processes and social interaction to become effective writers.

Although there is limited empirical evidence connecting writing test scores to the use of the writing process, Shelton and Fu (2004) reported successful scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test from the classroom of one teacher who involved her students in a yearlong writing workshop and the writing process approach. This

teacher's goal was to develop strong writers and to meet the demands of the state writing test. As a result of the instruction, students demonstrated their willingness to work hard at writing and reported that they enjoyed writing. When writing test scores were analyzed, the teacher's class average was higher than the state average, and 13 of 27 students scored 4 or above out of the highest possible score of 5. In addition, more students in her class (5) scored a 5 than in any other class in the school's testing history. Experts in the writing field offer years of experience indicating that students schooled in authentic writing experiences consider themselves writers who can meet the demands of writing tasks (see, e.g., Calkins, 1994; Calkins, Montgomery, Santman, & Falk, 1998; Campbell, 2002; Falk, 1998; Graves, 1983; Kern, Andre, Schilke, Barton, & McGuire, 2003). Although these studies do support a link between the writing process and test scores, the lack of other research indicates that this area is ripe for exploration.

6 + 1 Traits

Most of the empirical evidence supporting the use of the 6 + 1 Traits to teach effective writing has been reported by the NWREL. Arter, Spandel, Culham, and Pollard (1994) conducted a study that measured the effectiveness of the traits with six classrooms of fifth-grade students from various learning environments. A treatment group of 67 students and a control group of 65 students were formed by randomly assigning classrooms to each group. The treatment group received direct instruction on three of the six traits—ideas, organization, and voice—while the control group received no specific training on any of the traits.

The teachers in the control group did provide instruction in prewriting. The treatment group showed substantial growth in mean scores (0.55–0.87 on a 5-point scale) for the three traits directly taught, with minimal growth (0.10–0.53) reported for the untaught traits. The control group showed minimal growth (0–0.21) for all six traits. These researchers concluded that student writing will improve with instruction on the features of writing that are identified as of most importance and to the extent that students are taught what good and poor writing looks like in relation to those features.

In a study of 780 papers from 3rd-, 5th-, 8th-, and 11th-grade students, scored to determine the relationship between the six traits and holistic assessments, each of the traits was shown to be highly predictive of passing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning in writing. It was reported that a model using the sum of the six traits' scores was a predictor of success for 79% of the students (Coe, 2000). According to Coe, students' use of the six traits was "strongly predictive" of their passing the state test for Washington. Models using ideas, conventions, or sentence fluency were accurate predictors of whether 75% of students would pass the test, whereas models using organization, word choice, or voice were accurate predictors for 70%.

A search of the literature revealed two separate studies by researchers independent of NWREL. James, Abbott, and Greenwood (2001) did a study with fourth-grade students in which writing instruction included a combination of the writing process, writing workshop, graphic organizers, and the 6 + 1 Traits. The study evaluated the effectiveness of the instructional model used in the school, which was designed to meet the writing standards mandated by the state and district. Posttest scores showed an improvement over pretest scores after a nine-week instructional period. The researchers reported that it appeared the improvements were due to the use of 6 + 1 Traits, writing workshop, and graphic organizers, all research-validated components of an effective writing program.

Another study conducted with kindergarten through fifth-grade students in one school in Kansas focused on narrative writing instruction using the 6 + 1 Traits model (Jarmer, Kozol, Nelson, & Salsberry, 2000). Improvements were shown between pretest and posttest scores over three years. The research indicated that students increased their scores, going from a 1 or 2 score to a 3, 4, or 5, with an average increase of 54% for kindergarten, 92% for first grade, 54% for second grade, 68% for third grade, 40% for fourth grade, and 42% for fifth grade. In addition, state writing assessment scores and standardized achievement test scores increased in language expression and mechanics.

TABLE 1
An Internet survey of 50 U.S. states' writing assessments^a

Specific indicators of comparison ^b	States
Use 6 + 1 Traits explicitly	Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Nebraska
Use most of 6 + 1 Traits	Oklahoma, Michigan, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin
Use few of 6 + 1 Traits	Alabama, Kentucky, New Mexico, New York
Explicitly indicate use of writing process	Arizona, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas
Address writing conventions	All states, to some degree

^aCommon grades tested: 4th and 8th, with exit tests at 10th, 11th, or 12th.

^bThe other states use at least one or more of the terminology or similar terminology to describe the scoring criteria for their tests. To see information about policies for all U.S. states and territories, visit www.ccsso.org/chief_state_school_officers/state_education_agencies/index.cfm.

Discussion

In preparing this article, we conducted an Internet search of all 50 states' standardized writing tests to determine whether 6 + 1 Traits, writing workshop, and the writing process were indicated as standards for each of the states' tests. Our search helped us to obtain the information summarized in Table 1: grades tested, how many states (explicitly or implicitly) used 6 + 1 Traits, and any indications of use of writing workshop and the writing process.

The 6 + 1 Traits are, to some degree, incorporated with all 50 states' writing standards and are assessed on the writing tests. All states' standards reflect the use of at least one of the traits. Fourteen states use at least some or most of the 6 + 1 Traits of writing. Four states explicitly indicate use of all the traits as scoring criteria, and their rubrics use the exact terminology of the traits. Other states use most of the traits' terminology but may pair them. For instance, Kentucky uses the terms *purpose* and *audience* as one trait and describes the trait as writing that has a clear focus and employs a suitable tone, a phrase that describes voice. Students who are taught to view their writing in terms of the 6 + 1 Traits during drafting, revising, and editing (steps in the writing process) should be able to meet the objectives of the state tests because most use the same or similar criteria. Many states' writing curricula were revised during the 1980s to reflect a writing process approach (Hoffman, 1998), and some of the terminology, such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, is seen in the states'

standards. Four states explicitly used all the terminology associated with the writing process in describing the writing task. In addition, all state tests assess writing conventions.

From what we found in our Internet search, we can conclude that using writing workshop as a setting for teaching writing and incorporating the writing process and 6 + 1 Traits will help students meet the standards for state writing assessments as well as develop skills needed to be effective writers. We have advocated the use of the approaches described in our article, and it is evident from our search that these approaches are part of the criteria for most state writing standards.

A brief review of each approach along with a scenario that illustrates classroom use is presented here.

A review

During writing workshop, students learn how to use the writing process in order to become fluent, independent writers. "Development in reading and writing can only take place in an environment where students regularly engage in reading and writing, where there are frequent opportunities for students to read and write whole, meaningful texts," according to Rhodes and Dudley-Marling (1988, p. 80). Teachers who implement writing workshop provide such an environment and encourage students to use the writing process. In writing workshop, students have the opportunity to

learn from a variety of instructional methods and demonstrate what they know through a choice of writing topics and genres. Students build skills in writing content—genre, elaboration, voice, clarity, word choice, organization—and in the conventions of writing during minilessons (Tompkins, 2003). Learning is social and collaborative, and writing workshop provides the setting for students to collaborate and share what they have learned through the writing process. As a result, students become stronger writers from interaction with peers.

The survey of the 50 states' writing tests revealed that most require students to write in one of these genres in response to a prompt: narrative, informative, expository, or persuasive. Teachers can use three of the modes of writing—teacher-modeled writing or write-aloud, shared writing, and guided writing—in minilessons about each genre. First, during a write-aloud, the teacher models how to write in each genre. The whole class or a small group works with the teacher to produce a piece of writing. Then students write using that genre as they compose their own pieces. If students are given daily opportunities to write meaningful texts while learning the different genres of writing, they will develop fluency and be able to write in that genre if asked to do so on a writing test. Fluent, independent writers do well on state writing tests as well as in other writing experiences (Manzo, 2001).

A strong link exists between writing assessment and instruction, and the 6 + 1 Traits model incorporates student self-assessment and teacher assessment strategies as well as providing instruction for improving writing. The 6 + 1 Traits are most effective when they are integrated with writing workshop, and the writing process is enhanced when all traits are incorporated. The use of these traits helps teachers and students become reflective learners with a common vocabulary that enables them to talk about the writing. "This ability to assess and reflect on their writing serves them well throughout their lives" (NWREL, 2004, p. 2). Incorporating 6 + 1 Traits and writing workshop is a natural way for students to become fluent, independent writers.

The use of 6 + 1 Traits and modes of writing within the writing workshop helps students to focus and reflect on the processes involved in writing. The work of Hayes and Flower (1986) emphasized research on cognitive processes and the interrelat-

edness of thinking, learning, and writing. According to Hayes and Flower, "Sound writing instruction should draw on a clear understanding of the organization of cognitive processes underlying the act of writing" (p. 1106). In the process-oriented approach to teaching writing that Hayes and Flower advocated, the teacher guides the students through the process of writing, teaching them what they are supposed to do when they write.

We believe that incorporating 6 + 1 Traits and modes of writing with the writing process and writing workshop is the best way to teach students to think and learn while practicing and perfecting the process of writing. Conversely, the typical writing-to-the-prompt test preparation that students receive in the classroom focuses on the product of their writing and provides students no instruction or direction in reflecting on the processes involved. Hayes and Flower (1986) emphasized that process-oriented instruction is more successful than product-oriented instruction. Although use of the writing process encourages higher level thinking as students choose a topic, plan, compose, revise, and edit, writing to a prompt is a comparatively low-level task.

Writing workshop, the writing process, 6 + 1 Traits, and modes of writing prepare students to take standardized writing tests, but test preparation is not the goal. The goal of good writing instruction is to produce good writers.

Scenario

The following fictitious scenario illustrates how writing workshop and the writing process, 6 + 1 Traits, and modes of writing would look in a typical classroom. The teacher, Ms. Ruiz, was faced with the dilemma of how to prepare her students for the state-mandated writing test as well as develop strong writers who could write beyond test requirements. The state's writing objectives emphasized process as well as product and incorporated several of the 6 + 1 Traits for effective writing. Writing workshop and the writing process as instructional models enabled her to combine the components of quality writing instruction.

Writing workshop time in Ms. Ruiz's fourth-grade classroom is very exciting. On a typical day, Ms. Ruiz begins with a minilesson on voice, using portions of *What You Know First* (MacLachlan,

1995) because she knows that authentic literature can serve as a model for children's writing (Fletcher, 2001; Kress, 1994; Wolf & Wolf, 2002). Throughout the reading of the book, Ms. Ruiz gives examples of the author's voice and then uses an excerpt to demonstrate.

I could
If I wanted
Stay here
With the new people,
If they'll have me.
I will live in the attic
With my books
And my paints
And paper so I can write letters
To Mama and Papa
If they miss me. (MacLachlan, p. 10)

Ms. Ruiz explains that one can hear the voice of a child throughout this story and points out that the writing portrays how a child would react, the words a child would use, and the unrealistic solution to a problem a child might have if faced with the prospect of moving. She discusses that the girl's idea to stay in the attic with the "new people" is a solution a child might think of.

She uses excerpts from other texts to show how authors use strong words, figurative language, vivid descriptions, and even punctuation to add voice to their writing. One example she shows from *What You Know First* is the line "I don't need an ocean. I've got an ocean of grass" (MacLachlan, p. 22). Students discuss how they can actually visualize what an ocean of grass must look like and how they could bring out their own voices in their writing using similar figurative language.

Next, Ms. Ruiz uses a write-aloud to illustrate how to add vivid, descriptive words to writing. To implement the write-aloud, she chooses a simple sentence and has the students suggest vivid words to give it voice. For instance, Ms. Ruiz gives the students the sentence "The dog barked" from someone's writing piece, and they rewrite it as "The tiny Chihuahua barked fiercely as it nipped at the postman's exposed ankles." Ms. Ruiz challenges the class to think in terms of their own voices as they draft or revise that day.

After conducting a status-of-the-class report, Ms. Ruiz asks the class to begin writing. Several children who are starting new pieces make prewriting webs as they plan. Some children begin a first draft, while others revise and edit their drafts as they confer with their peers or the teacher. A few have completed their pieces of writing and are publishing them.

Shanique and Michelle read each other's pieces. Michelle says, "I can really hear your voice in this part, but do you remember what Ms. Ruiz showed us in the book? I think the ideas the author used will help you add voice." Shanique then adds vivid, descriptive words and changes a few sentences to have a variety of sentence types. She then draws pictures with her words by using onomatopoeia and metaphors.

Ms. Ruiz calls several students for writing conferences. After about 45 minutes, Ms. Ruiz has several volunteers share their writing. She says, "Boys and girls, I want you to listen carefully and see if you can hear the writer's voice, just like we could hear the author's voice in our book today." Shanique and several other students share how they added voice to their writing.

Best practice can meet state standards

Our purpose in writing this article was to demonstrate that combining the 6 + 1 Traits, three of Cooper and Kiger's (2003) modes of writing, writing workshop, and the writing process is the best, most natural way to nurture good writers. Good writers will do well on standardized writing tests. We do recognize that what we have advocated is not a "magic cure" for the teaching and testing dilemma generated by today's educational climate. It is evident from our Internet search, however, that these approaches are part of the criteria for most states' writing standards. In addition, our conclusion is supported by theory and by classroom practice. Writing workshop and the writing process, 6 + 1 Traits, and modes of writing offer the best solution for producing good writers who can write to standards assessed on state writing tests and for real-world purposes.

We acknowledge that it will take courage for teachers to abandon the drill and practice imposed

by many school districts in preparation for the state tests and to use the strategies we have described, especially if they have not used them before. In order to do this, teachers must trust (a) the theory that supports sound instructional practices; (b) the strategies that have been proven to help students become successful writers; (c) themselves as knowledgeable professionals; and, most important, (d) the students they teach to respond to good teaching.

As in other historical periods of educational reform, the current assessment trend in the United States moves toward greater standardization and uniformity via legislative acts and regulatory supervision (Campbell, 2002). This movement is evidenced in state-mandated testing with its resultant high-stakes consequences and in legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002). Given the present climate of accountability, most schools see no alternative other than to work toward meeting the states' standards and legislative mandates. This goal can be accomplished through excellent instruction that prepares students to be full, literate members of our society and not just people who can pass a test.

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