

## CONSIDERING ATTITUDES TOWARD WRITING

One area which does not often receive immediate consideration from evaluators of writing is attitudes toward writing. For example, Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell's *Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging* (Urbana, Ill. NCTE, 1977), a best seller which contains some of the best professional thinking on the subject of evaluation, does not mention evaluating attitudes toward writing. Other professional literature on evaluation emulates the pattern of *Evaluating Writing*; methodologies for scoring, discerning intellectual growth and identifying syntactic features appear frequently, but attitudes toward writing are largely ignored by evaluators.

The profession's lack of attention to attitudes toward writing is mirrored by lay people concerned with the quality of student writing. I have been involved in

evaluating writing programs for both secondary and higher education and have participated in discussions with administrators, parents, and teachers from other disciplines. Words such as "competence," "intelligence," and "proficiency" figure prominently in such discussions, but the word "attitude" is rarely uttered.

Attitudes represent a complex set of cognitive, affective and behavioral features. That is, attitudes include what one thinks, how one feels, and what one does with regard, in this case, to writing. Accordingly, questions probing attitudes toward writing can range from "studying grammar improves writing skills" (thinking) to "I like what I write" (feeling) to "I leave notes for members of my family" (doing). The Emig (1979) scale contains items which are predominantly behavioral; Gere