

Series Foreword

For many teachers of second language writers, and perhaps teachers in general, assessment may seem a necessary evil: an impediment to their supportive roles as nurturers of their students' learning, a tedious and labor-intensive chore, or, still worse, an institutional or government-mandated imposition of goals and measurement tools oblivious to the learning styles and accomplishments of specific students in specific settings that their teachers know best. Yet, as Deborah Crusan makes clear in this volume, to try to ignore or distance oneself as much as possible from the "evils" of assessment can mean, at the very least, missing an opportunity to enhance classroom practice with the invaluable input that reliable and valid performance assessment data can provide. In an age when assessment is increasingly high-tech, corporate, and, some would argue, politically motivated, it may even be dangerous if those with students' interests at heart do not actively engage with writing assessment issues—dangerous for students struggling with a new language, whose futures may be determined by test scores, and dangerous for teachers as professionals, who, if content to leave assessment concerns to others, may see their decision-making power and ability to chart courses of instruction tailored to their students' needs jeopardized.

An active assessment researcher herself and experienced secondary and post-secondary classroom teacher and teacher trainer, Crusan not only makes a compelling case for becoming knowledgeable about L2 writing assessment, but offers the means to do so. Her highly accessible, thought-provoking presentation of the conceptual and practical dimensions of writing assessment, both for the classroom and on a larger scale, promises to engage readers who have previously found

the technical detail of other works on assessment off-putting, as well as those who have had no previous exposure to the study of assessment at all. Crusan assumes no prior knowledge on her readers' part, but she does assume her readers can and will care about her subject; her passion for it will very likely prove to be contagious.

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