

Divergent Formative Assessment: Writing Plans

Winifred M. Burke

Churchpath Cottage, Over Stratton, South Petherton, UK

Email: wyn.burke@btopenworld.com

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Abstract

This article looks to raise awareness among practitioners and researchers of the potential of the writing plan as an important focus for formative assessment for informing teacher's planning and students' learning. Convergent and divergent formative assessments are highlighted in terms of study practice as well as preparation for examinations. As transactional writing has such a high profile in schools and colleges and becomes more difficult as higher levels of examination are undertaken the author looks to share why she considers transactional writing plans as a potential source for divergent formative assessment are worthy of greater consideration by practitioners and researchers.

Keywords

Convergent and Divergent Formative Assessment, Transactional Writing, Writing Plans, Essay-Based Examinations

1. Introduction

Essay-based examinations, to varying degrees, can be daunting to students across schooling levels and as students advance to higher levels of education, writing and writing well is expected. This article is not an examination of examinations nor a study of how to study; however, it does provide a synopsis of processes of studying prior to, and the recall of topic-related content during essay-based study sessions or tests and examinations completed by primary, secondary and university students. The purpose of this article is to highlight the differences between convergent and divergent formative assessment and to prioritize discussion about an associative part of the transactional writing process—the writing plan. To consider its form, function, and the range of first responses students might include to propel their essay writing. The reader might say that the answer

is obvious—that students generate topic-related ideas they later incorporate in their essays. That observation would be correct and there is literature to support that students who generate a writing plan are likely to achieve higher writing scores than those who do not have an accompanying plan (Goldstein & Garr, 1996). However, might there be other features students consider, for example cueing their deliberations over the topic prompt or an assessment conversation (divergent formative assessment) with the teacher during planning, rather than the teacher just imparting strategies earlier in the term. I suggest this would offer a valuable opportunity to pitch feedback within the student's zone of proximal development (Rieber & Carton, 1987). In other words, could teacher intervention at this stage add to deeper learning of content or skills (Harlen & James, 1997: p. 370) on the student's part not just performativity on a test or examination (Broadfoot, 1999).

Transactional writing is defined (Britton et al., 1975) and the major differences between convergent and divergent formative assessment explained before illustrations are drawn from the author's own experiences as a student and latterly as an inspector and researcher drawing on case study and action research methodologies to encourage others to undertake more extensive empirical work in this field.

Finally, each of these strands are drawn together to focus the readers' attention on the value particularly of divergent formative assessment for developing student learning and teacher planning during the study process and how the writing plan can offer an opportunity for this to happen.

2. Transactional Writing Defined

Britton et al. (1975) reported that the overwhelming use of writing in British schools was transactional. This was a transaction between the teacher and student usually for the purpose of evaluating what the student knew (convergent assessment). Transactional writing includes format and presentation; clear form and logical sequence; developed and elaborated ideas to convey and clarify meaning; recognizable letters and words; first or third person writing depending on genre or mode; complexity/specialized use of language/structure; clear purposeful effect; audience needs and perspectives; breadth of vocabulary; abstraction and speculation; extension beyond personal experiences (Stein, 1990; White, 1994). Assessors of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1998) in Writing rated essays based on the

- adequate development of ideas.
- well-chosen details (reasons, examples).
- clear organization.
- conventional spelling, punctuation, formatting, etc.
- precision in word choice.
- sustained controlling idea,
- effective use of transition and variety in sentence structure (Greenwald et al., 1999).

Transactional writing is still the writing style cultivated in most educational settings; it strives for analysis and explication through objective observation and to a lesser extent, personal anecdotal experiences. Transactional writing in essay form is sub divided into the two categories, informative and conative language (Britton et al., 1975). According to these authors, informative language makes information available and is “*used to record, report, classify, compare, infer, deduce and hypothesis, to ask and answer questions, to assert, explain and evaluate*” (p91) across the curriculum. By contrast, the writer uses conative language to influence the reader by ordering, instructing, advising, or persuading.

This article acknowledges the work of Britton and his associate’s notion that when students are generating and inscribing tentative responses about the writing topic on a provided planning page, they apply both informative and conative language to prompt themselves (reader/writer) as they develop their essay draft.

One form of transactional writing not referred to so far but most clear in the work of students studying for higher degrees is argumentative writing. It draws on the features mentioned above but students must be able to back up statements with evidence. This can take the form of quantitative or qualitative data to support the case being made or references to other writers’ work to clarify a point, support a hypothesis or raise reader’s awareness.

3. Convergent and Divergent Formative Assessment

Pryor & Torrance (1999) started work on an action research partnership with teachers by supplying models and supporting teachers in their developing understanding of the potential of formative assessment for learning. They found that progress was slow because primary teachers had to relearn approaches to observation and questioning before they could really understand the deeper consequences of their actions on students’ learning. Much is written about the zone of proximal development (Rieber & Carton, 1987: p. 212) as applied to students as learners. This is the gap between what the student can do on their own and their potential achievement with help from an informed adult. These researchers confirmed the need to be aware of the zone of proximal development within which each teacher is working before any development work could be contemplated.

Not long after completing an EdD focused on formative assessment and having had my first writing published (Burke, 2004). I took part in a conference in London on this subject. Paul Black was the keynote speaker. Taking part in a discussion with him about the value of questioning in informing learning I admitted my research focused on this form of assessment. Using me Black proved to the teachers present just how effective in-depth questioning could be in deepening learning, when pitched within the teacher’s/researcher’s zone of proximal development. I left that session feeling like I had been to a gym and had a thorough mental rather than physical work out but I also came away thinking about the place for in-depth questioning in enriching learning in ordinary classrooms.

(Black, 2006).

Contrast this with the kind of in-service training most teachers receive as new initiatives such as formative assessment are rolled out across the country.

It would have been interesting to interview the teachers present to find out if watching Professor Black's demonstration had any effect on their later practice.

Following the Black and Wiliam (1998a) review of formative assessment, the government's interest in the findings and particularly that this form of assessment led to improved examination grades for students with learning difficulties meant that with government funding this form of assessment was suddenly very visible in United Kingdom classrooms. From my reading I was already aware of two conceptually distinct ideal approaches to formative assessment which researchers termed convergent and divergent (Pryor & Torrance, 1996: p. 207). I recognized that this model came close to linking descriptive theory with instructional practice as it named two conceptually distinct ideal approaches to formative assessment. The model, Convergent and Divergent Formative Assessment grew from the work of the ESRC-funded project "*Investigating and Developing Formative Teacher Assessment in Primary Schools*." However, what I saw in school classrooms was convergent assessment. In convergent teacher assessment the researchers note that the most important thing is to find out if the student knows a predetermined thing. This form of assessment, the researchers supported, is characterized by.

- detailed planning,
- the use of tick lists and can-do statements and
- an analysis of the student and curriculum from the point of view of the curriculum.

It is carried out routinely using closed or pseudo-open questions and tasks. The formative implications are behaviorist although the researchers maintained that recourse to behaviorism may not be self-conscious. This is assessment of the student by the teacher with the intention being to teach or assess the next predetermined thing in a linear or at least a pre-planned progression. This method stresses measurement against goals.

As an inspector as I moved from school to school I found teachers using mini whiteboards to obtain feedback from students. These appeared in both primary and secondary classrooms. After instruction, the teacher would ask a closed question to see, for example if the students had worked out the correct answer to a problem written on the shared whiteboard. Rarely was this followed up at the time by the teacher but one would expect follow-up work planned for the students who did not have the correct answer. This is an example of convergent formative assessment as encouraged by the writings of researchers like Shirley Clarke (1998).

Divergent teacher assessment, on the other hand, emphasizes the learner's understanding rather than the assessor's agenda. The important consideration is to find out what the student knows and more importantly understands. This

kind of approach is characterized by.

- less detailed planning,
- open forms of questioning and recording and
- an analysis of the student and the curriculum from the student's point of view.

As a student and latterly researcher interested in formative assessment I recognize the importance of the teacher having good subject knowledge and inter-personal skills necessary for engaging at this level if metacognitive processes (thinking about thinking) are to be stimulated in the student. In the example cited earlier Professor Black had acquired this knowledge through his experience of research and he was able to stimulate my metacognitive processes through his use of open questions so that my understanding of this complex area of study led me to new ways of thinking.

As an undergraduate I also received help from a tutor who possessed a high level of art historical knowledge and the inter-personal skills for example to extend my understanding of the work of the American artist Pollock; and how painting was now perceived. Pollock's work is large in scale and fills the viewer's visual field. I understood the concept but was struggling to communicate that understanding to the reader of my essay. My tutor listened to my problem and in response drew a stick figure in front of a large rectangle standing for a canvas. He also drew two arrows from the figure's eyes one to the right border and one to the left. This opened my eyes to the value of models in reinforcing complex ideas when communicating with a reader of one's writing. It provided me with a prompt and served me well in the examination when a question about Jackson Pollock appeared on the examination paper. More importantly, I still recall that drawing and over the years have used other forms of modelling to gain student interest and hopefully inform learning.

The formative implication of divergent teacher assessment is that a social constructivist view of education is adopted with an intention to teach within the zone of proximal development (Rieber & Carton, 1987: p. 212). In this case assessment is carried out jointly by the teacher and student. Researchers point to the advantages of an 'educational model that meshes with a constructivist curriculum, and where assessment is inherently idiosyncratic and context-dependent (Calfee, 1996: p. 100).

The divergent model fits well with learning and assessment as a collaborative enterprise where students are taught to think for themselves and to get a similar concept of quality to that held by their teacher (Sadler, 1989) as this integrates assessment with learning. Pryor & Torrance (1996) support that most formative assessment practices hold a mixture of convergent and divergent elements rather than being purely one or the other.

As a teacher I had always tried to work within each student's zone of proximal development and as a researcher the divergent model informed my practice but was not always acted upon. The following is an example from a piece of action research I conducted with Year six students the cue being to write about an usual

experience in their lives (Burke, 2011: p. 22).

“My Strange Experience” by James

“Come on James, get your pajamas on, we’ve got a big day in the morning.”

A few years ago, we (my family and I) were getting ready to go to the Isle of Man to meet our relatives. We had everything planned out; we would pack in the morning, drive to Liverpool by 1pm and catch the Seacat to the Isle of Man.

I was getting ready for bed when I heard a shrill shriek from downstairs.

“Ben (my dad) get the suitcase and pack. NOW!”

“My mum had found out that the time we had to arrive by was not 1pm tomorrow but 1am in the morning. That meant we had less than 5 hours to pack and get to Liverpool. We only just made it, though, because we were stuck in a 20-minute queue. (By the way, we had a lovely time on the Isle of Man.)”

Feedback

James used a few words, in this piece, and in his postscript assured the reader that the visit was a success. Anna (one of the other students) asked “why did you use so little description?” He replied “I did not think it was necessary”. I wanted the reader to be involved in the story and supply the details themselves. This response to Anna’s question allowed me to probe James’s understanding of the reader/writer relationship. He explained that the reader he had in his mind was “someone of my age and interest level.”

I fed back my appreciation of how he used direct speech to locate the reader in the situation and cleverly mixed past and present in a fast-moving account of the events. He suggested tensions but did not dwell on them. He resolved the situation with a happy conclusion. Sadler warned that the choices facing a writer starting with a blank page are too variable to be judged by criteria. He offered the metaphor of writers like James and Anna following different pathways and heading towards the horizon. The challenge for me as their teacher was to know how to support that process (Burke, 2011: p. 22).

(The names of these writers have been changed to maintain anonymity)

As an ex-teacher faced with the above situation I recognize with hindsight that my intervention and feedback would have been of more value to James at the planning stage. He had written a plan and I had read but not reacted to it. Like myself I wonder how many of my teachers/readers, would have had to change mindsets when trying to adopt divergent formative assessment practices in the classroom because judging pupils completed writing had become such an integral part of their practice?

In research mode I asked one Year 6 teacher what her students’ thought literacy was about. She confirmed *“I think they would think it is about writing.”* When asked why she replied, *“I try to give them variety but as teachers we need evidence that they are performing as they should and writing ensures we have that.”*

Writing as a mode of learning (Emig, 1977) and as an intentional strategy is also a means of learning. Studying from a text, from several texts, and from

classroom/lecture notes can involve attentive reading and interpreting; personalized notetaking (Piolat et al., 2005) and summarizing; thinking through, clarification of and making connections between concepts; re-reading and committing to memory relevant information necessary for written application. At primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels tests and past examination questions are often made available to students to scaffold or support their revision preparations; these can vary in quality. Studying and becoming familiar with types of assessment questions and how to respond to them are skills that ought to be taught to, and internalized by, students for successful learning. Study strategies include previewing, questioning, underlining, note-taking, outlining and forms of diagrammatic outlining, and summarizing (Devine & Kania, 2003). The last four strategies involve writing “helps them discover meanings for themselves” (Devine & Kania, 2003). In summary, studying demands a student’s concentrated effort to extract, synthesize, abstract, and transform information. This period of study allows students to reflect and explore subject matter and to check, test, and revise where necessary their understanding for which they will be examined.

This article’s premise is that since reading and writing are two sides of the same coin that the strategies used while studying (and reading) serve equally as prewriting strategies when embarking on planning essay writing. These would enable students to recall or retrieve memorized content information as quickly and efficiently during the planning time. The choice and application of one or more strategies therefore serve as a function or idea retrieval and preliminary formation of an essay.

One of the most valuable strategies the Open University introduced me to as an undergraduate writer was being required to give written answers about three key themes in a sociology course using no more than one hundred words in each case. Immigration, Unemployment and Race Relations. I recall searching dictionaries and thesaurus to find single words that would serve the place of three. It also made me pay closer attention to the course materials as well as read more widely about the topics concerned. As I had included evidence of the planning process involved when sending these essays, I realized later, that I had given a valuable opportunity for my new tutor to pitch feedback within my zone of proximal development (Rieber & Carton, 1987) not for these essays but for future assignments.

This is an example of where divergent formative assessment is most effective for improving learning and teacher planning. As this was distant learning rather than face to face as the student my feedback to the teacher was invaluable in affecting her planning.

4. The Writing Plan as a Formative Assessment Tool

As students progress within and from primary to secondary to tertiary education they are instructed in and so expected to show a range of organizational patterns

depending on the purpose of writing, the topic to be written about and the writing context. Through schooling students are regularly exposed to and encouraged to practice writing conventions. As they advance through education levels, they are also expected to emulate the academic literacies and conventions that are part of the subject matter or discipline they pursue. As such, in the first minutes of an assignment or examination, a student might consider their presentation style and record organizing categories or signposts to help them order their information recollections. Skeletal structure might be likely to be clear in the writing plans of older students rather than younger ones and so affect the quality of the essays.

To conform to each area of the curriculum students may need to shape their essays according to established standards or criteria. Structure or arrangement is taught to help writers organize their ideas and present them clearly to an audience (Graham et al., 2003). The introductory and concluding sections of an essay are bookends that capture or lose a reader's interest. Written texts are commonly divided into three sections; "*the beginning, the middle and the end.*" Another set of terms is the "*Introduction, development, or complication (body) and resolution (conclusion).*" (Tompkins, 2004: p. 348) While it is expected that essays given for assessment are organised as recommended above there is debate about the form that essays take. A casual glance by the teacher, over a student's shoulder, reinforced by closed or pseudo-open questions would reveal to the teacher whether the plan is starting to fulfil these demands (convergent assessment). The use of more open questions (divergent assessment) might reveal where further scaffolding, by the teacher, is needed or greater understanding by the student.

Understanding the intent of an assessment prompt and addressing it comprehensively are essential as missing the point is detrimental to one's later written communication (Clark, 2003). Each prompt in the form of a question, a scenario or a quote with an instruction to "do" one of the following: analyze, illustrate, suggest, criticize, relate, demonstrate, to name but a few can contain key concepts and have operative words that students are expected to be familiar with, be able to identify and extract and subsequently craft a well-considered explanation in writing. Throughout the first minutes while mulling over one or more key words in the prompt and even writing one or all keywords on the planning space available, the student reconstitutes and re-forms the prompt that could trigger information. This could cause a flood or a trickle of recollections (or none) sufficient and relevant at that moment to support his/her composing and developing composition.

Ideas are abstractions and are dynamic; sometimes condensed in a single work and sometimes in broad concepts or categories. These higher-level abstractions are essential to writing. Since abstractions are filled with meaning, the writer must include details or facts to substantiate and make them valid. So, to inform oneself as a writer-reader is to impart, to state, to give character or essence to meaning and prior knowledge. Researchers noted in their studies of primary

children's essays that the content tended to exemplify knowledge telling as a list of idea units (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). Thinking can provide the writer with more ideas than are needed in one's writing; and it is necessary to impart to students that they learn to check when planning:-

- How much writing is enough?
- time needed to complete the writing.
- The consequences of too many ideas

Novice writers' essays tend to be composed of information drawn from memory with little or no consideration for purpose or audience. Freedman & Pringle's (1980: p. 317) examination of student levels of abstracting in their essays revealed "*the degree to which the primary data dealt with in the essay had been classified, ordered and integrated by the writer within some superordinate hierarchic conceptional pattern.*" The knowledgeable teacher should find time to engage with the student at the point of perceived need when writing plans are explored in the classroom so that the students themselves as writer and reader of their own essays have a model to work with when facing examination pressures.

A British team of researchers led by Hicks (2003) (reported in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) collected and reviewed a sample of writing plans generated by one hundred year six and year nine students and surveyed these individuals and their respective teachers from eight schools. Teachers were reported to agree on several issues; *that "analysis of task type and planning for writing has a positive impact in the work of their students; (p18); that organization of ideas for structure was 'the most important element of planning' and essay structure is 'the key area that improved with planning' (p19) and that detailed planning resulted in higher quality written work, particularly in terms of structure and use of vocabulary for effect.*" These teachers were also aware that students may plan dutifully and still not apply their plans efficiently. Year six teachers showed that in preparation for longer writing tasks and writing for test conditions, they encouraged their students to focus on the following elements: *"text type specific frames to support text organizing; paragraphing and organization of ideas. Year nine teachers gave similar advice; that planning was important and to consider structure, paragraphing, and opening phrases."*

Transactional writing therefore in its preparatory state in writing plans involves recall and attention to conventional writing practices, earlier teacher instruction and guided practice to conform to the principles of organization of the writing being undertaken (Kellogg, 2008). It is also about the recovery or reforming of prior knowledge and expressing this content in a timed writing-on-demand setting.

Further investigation is needed to ascertain:-

- if there is one or a combination of prewriting strategies that effectively helps the reader-writer recall information, to generate and organize tentative ideas.
- The relationship between students' understanding of a topic prompt and their ability to use it in their essay.

- The efficacy of journalistic questions (who? What? why? etc.) recorded in writing plans and how this influences later writing.

Whilst transactional writing has been professionally researched formative assessment for informing writers as learners and teachers as planners still needs further consideration. As a researcher in the fields of literacy and assessment I can see advantages for both students and teachers for an assessment conversation whilst students are at the planning stage of essay writing.

The purpose of interaction by the teacher at the level of writing plans, would be to improve the student's understanding, and not just inform teacher knowledge about how well individuals are likely to perform on the test or examination although given the level of pressure on schools this will also be a consideration.

Whilst there is no mandate that preparing a writing plan in the classroom or an examination is compulsory, students should be aware of the value of preparing a plan before composing an essay. The content recorded in a writing plan may consist of doodles, drawings, or detailed or skeletal topic-related content "*a kind of data collection*"; (Colyar, 2009: p. 423), a writing space for thoughts thus anchoring them for later attention, expansion, and elaboration; these could be perceived as hardcopy snapshots of initial responses to an assigned prompt. The writing plan becomes "*a secondary conversation partner*" (Piolat et al., 2005: p. 291). The act of preparing a writing plan, if at all, commences after consideration of the prompt or writing topic, conditioned by personal choice, habit, or teacher instruction. The time factor in the writing situation, and the context of Standardized assessment tests, GCSE, A level or higher degree examinations, all adds to the pressure.

I do not discount planning cognitively as planning is an ongoing process that occurs while each student interprets the prompt, summons information from memory, generates and records, translates and reviews tentative topic-related responses on paper during the first few minutes of the examination period. It is not my intent to discuss student writer's internal cognitive processes which have been investigated and reported by other researchers (Flower, 1990; Torrance et al., 2007). The focus here is to consider students' tentative impressions and aims at the start and how this writing plan could help teachers to gain a window on the student's thinking whilst there is time to provide feedback. Perrenoud (1998) writes that feedback should be undertaken with selected individuals during an activity through face-to-face exchange.

- Positive feedback based on interpretation of the writing plan is an effective way of gaining the learner's attention and setting in motion the writer's metacognitive processes (thinking about thinking)
- The writing plan could provide an environment in which intervention by the teacher is most meaningful for the student and where the effects of the feedback will influence subsequent practice.
- Success or failure will depend on such factors as how feedback is communicated and the significance of the timing.

“Even the mood or receptivity of the student will have a bearing on whether the feedback is internalized and the student learns” (Perrenoud, 1998: p. 86).

Perrenoud highlights how all teachers and their students enter a contract in the classroom and it is sometimes very difficult to change systems like formative assessment when teachers exercise power and do not encourage students to think for themselves. The assessment conversation at the point of need could help to correct this balance and lead to the elimination of misunderstandings, extend ideas, or raise self-esteem. One to one or in a small group the teacher has an opportunity at this planning stage to consider whether classroom instruction as a prewriting strategy has been internalized and can now be generalized into timed writing conditions. He/she can observe students’ jottings (subject content previously studied, the writing style and practices previously taught and to be demonstrated) as are recorded from thought in part onto a planning page (or the margins) in the initial moments before the essay is crafted. If correctly managed the student too has time to ask questions, to clarify ideas and refine his/her thought processes.

5. Conclusion

Space—the blank page, an area with no print or imprint—silent, waiting—a frontier for text reconstitution, re-discovery and meaning making. Writing space—made available to students under classroom conditions or examinations—may be a welcome space for some students but not for all to record tentative responses, personal text for integration into and the development of such text in the lined pages. Transactional writing does not just happen it needs careful planning but neither does formative assessment for learning and planning purposes. Formative convergent and divergent assessment are not easy to achieve in the ordinary classroom but worthy of consideration.

The points raised in this article:-

- Formative assessment models that fit with descriptive theory are useful when researching complex classroom practice.
- It is important to consider not only the student’s zone of proximal development but also that of the teacher when focusing on assessment for learning and planning.
- All teachers are teachers and assessors of transactional essay-writing and require knowledge of skill development and how to impart useful strategies to students.
- For divergent formative assessment to work students must become part of the same community of practice as their teachers.
- Teachers need to consider assessment of writing in terms of pre-planning and planning processes rather than after the event as is so often the case.
- Research findings produced under laboratory conditions are not always possible, without adaptation, to the more complex world of the classroom.
- The use of open-ended questions is crucial for divergent formative assessment.

As a researcher with an interest in the importance of formative assessment for teacher planning and student learning I am concerned that teachers are under too much pressure to get their students to perform well on tests and examinations and as a result they are too concerned with writing as evidence for external monitors (convergent assessment) rather than potential indicators for further development (divergent assessment).

Too little time is devoted to teachers in service training or time for teachers to function as researchers in their own classrooms. In my experience too few teachers draw distinctions between convergent and divergent assessment and use too many closed questions because their focus is often in covering an overburdened curriculum within tight time limits. An imbalance so easily occurs at classroom level between the use of convergent and divergent formative assessment. Although the Black and Wilam (1998a) review of formative assessment research found that under laboratory conditions students with learning difficulties gained higher grades in examination writing when exposed to formative means of assessment, later these same researchers admitted that practice in normal classrooms was more complex (Black & Wilam, 1998b).

Writing and writing assessment is not a once-a-year exercise, several details ought to be considered.

- the teacher's own appreciation of the use of writing plans,
- teacher clarification and explanation of how to employ the blank space made available to students,
- the teacher modeling good practice,
- "*Provision of a repertoire of routines and strategies and writing plan exemplars and joint teacher-student or student-student formative assessment on developing essay content*" (Hillocks Jr., 2005).

The knowledgeable classroom teacher, irrespective of school level or subject matter, ought first to acknowledge that he or she is also a teacher of writing. Preparing a writing plan through modelling by the teacher helps engage students to think through their writing topic as in the examples drawn from my own experience as a student. Understandably not every response to the prompt will be recorded on paper nor is every response set in concrete for use but serves as a tentative point to go forward. Teacher modelling would include demonstration of the myriad of ways of generating and re-generating ideas, shaping, organizing, re-visioning and clarifying the need to shift operations according to tasks and circumstances and that these techniques can be developed through much practice and time (National Council of Teachers of English, 2004). By highlighting research exemplars from both formative assessment and transactional writing, I hope that I have opened minds to the possibilities for improving learning if more open-ended questions are used and a better balance is achieved between convergent and divergent formative assessment at the level of essay planning. It is time for teachers as professionals to be given more say in what is possible in post pandemic schools so that more students are motivated to learn and fewer teachers are driven to leave the profession too early in their careers. I hope this

article opens a discussion among those concerned with educational assessment about the value of writing plans as a potential source for assessing student learning and improving teacher's planning. It is my hope too that researchers in this field will seek more empirical evidence by gathering qualitative and quantitative data to support the theorized benefits of divergent formative assessment in writing plans raised in this article. Teachers need information about the practical relevance of theories as well as how to implement the strategies outlined above if their lesson plans, assessment rubric and their feedback mechanisms are to reflect a better balance between divergent and convergent formative assessment than at present.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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