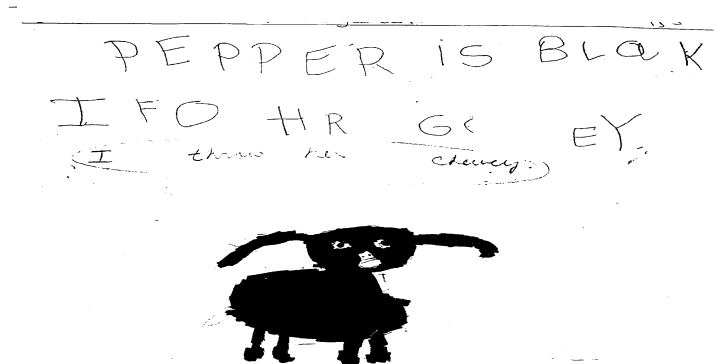


# A Resource Guide for Teaching Writing in Grades K-4

- Narratives
- Responses to Literature
- Reports: Writing to Inform
- Procedure: Writing to Direct or Instruct
- Personal Essays



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## Introduction

This guide has been compiled by the Vermont Standards and Assessment Consortium (VTSAC) as a resource to support K-4 teachers as they help students learn to write high quality pieces in the following genres of writing:

- Narratives
- Responses to Literature
- Reports
- Procedures
- Personal Essays

(Note: Despite a misprint in the *Vermont Framework* that suggests otherwise, personal essays ARE to be taught and assessed in grades K-4. Because persuasive writing is a focus in grade 5 and beyond, it is not included in this guide.)

The goal of this guide is to provide instructional tools that align with the Vermont standards and the Vermont writing rubrics to help provide a consistent K-4 writing program.

**In addition to the materials provided in this guide, VTSAC highly recommends *Reading and Writing: Grade by Grade Primary Literary Standards for Kindergarten through Third Grade* (1999, National Center on Education and the Economy). This excellent resource comes complete with two CDs showing exemplars of K-3 student writing (and reading!) and it can be ordered from [www.ncee.org](http://www.ncee.org)**

### Components of the Guide

This guide is a collection of work from Vermont schools and classrooms that will be useful to teachers of students in grades K-4 as they teach and assess writing across the genres. For each genre, it includes the following:

- a definition of the genre and sample assignments
- the Vermont New Standards Rubric for the genre
- a glossary for each genre
- a K-4 progression chart for the genre
- exemplars that meet the standard for given grade levels

Appendix A includes sample instructional tips and resources, and Appendix B shows a K-4 progression for conventions abstracted from rubrics created by VTSAC in 1999-2000.

This guide contains exemplars of student work at most grade levels K-4 for the various writing genres.

An **example** is miscellaneous and has no assurance of quality.

An **exemplar** is a piece of work that demonstrates a certain group's common agreement about what constitutes quality.

A **benchmark** does what an exemplar does but also denotes more than one score point on an assessment and has been through a school-wide, district-wide or state-wide process.

The exemplars included here relate to grades K-4. It is important to note that the benchmarks created for the state are for grades 5, 8, and 9/10. Teachers are encouraged by the Vermont Department of Education to allow students to include work from previous grades (with or without revision, as appropriate) with the knowledge that the pieces would be evaluated according to the “on-level” grade 5 benchmarks.

This guide incorporates material included in the Guide for Narratives and Reports published by VTSAC in September 2000. Some pieces that were deemed to meet the standard in that earlier guide are included here, and the developmental progressions in this guide began with the performance descriptors for “meets the standard” from the rubrics in that guide.

#### **Purposes of This Guide**

- to be used as an instructional resource to improve student writing
- to generate common expectations and language
- to provide a continuum of expectations throughout the elementary grades
- to provide instructional materials and approaches teachers may use in the classroom
- **not** to be used as a Department of Education document
- **not** to be used for high-stakes decision-making for students or schools (judging teachers; placing children; scoring assessments)

#### **Instructional Resources**

For each genre included in this guide, the section begins with a definition followed by sample assignments for that genre. More extended examples of instructional materials for narratives and responses to literature are included at the end of the guide in Appendix A.

**The instructional resources included throughout this guide may be photocopied for use in the classroom and for use in professional development activities with teachers.**

## **K-4 Progression for Conventions**

Although writing effectiveness across the genres is the predominant focus of writing instruction in grades K-4, development of the conventions of writing is a critical part of early writing as well. Appendix B presents a K-4 developmental progression for conventions that can be used across genres in all grade levels. This tool was abstracted from separate K-4 rubrics for conventions published by VTSAC in 1999.

## **The Vermont Standards and Assessment Consortium (VTSAC)**

The Vermont Standards and Assessment Consortium is an active organization of Vermont educators who are responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their schools and supervisory unions. The group has been steadfast in its commitment to using the *Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* to improve learning for all students. A primary focus of the organization has been to identify and create tools that can be used by school districts around the state to successfully implement and access Vermont standards and, thus, to improve the experience and learning of all students. This project was funded by a Goals 2000 Grant awarded through the Vermont Department of Education. This is not a Vermont Department of Education document, however, and it is intended as an instructional resource, not as a resource for high-stakes decision making for students or schools.

## **Acknowledgments**

We thank educators from the Newton School, the Orange South Supervisory Union in Randolph, the Alburg Elementary School, the Orange East Supervisory Union, the Burlington School District, Cavendish Elementary School, and the Underhill I.D. School for their hard work and high-quality materials. We also thank the Vermont Department of Education for rubrics, definitions, and instructional suggestions for the various genres. We are very appreciative of the time and effort provided in creating and critiquing materials by Joey Hawkins, Jane Miller and Sue Biggam.

## Teaching Writing in Grades K-4

Teaching writing in the primary grades is a continual process. Students need multiple opportunities to experience literature representing all genres, to write and receive feedback about their writing in all genres, and to use the writing process across the genres. The genres that are the focus in grades K-4 are:

- **Narratives:** Writing that tells a story or recounts an event.
- **Responses to Literature:** Writing in which the author reacts to the action, characters, plot, philosophy, or other elements of a piece of literature.
- **Reports:** Writing that results from gathering, investigating, and organizing facts and thoughts on a topic.
- **Procedures:** Writing that explains a process or informs an audience about how to do something.
- **Personal Essays:** Writing in which an author explores and shares the meaning of a personal experience.

Fluency of writing is an essential emphasis in grades K-4, and students need to write every day. At the kindergarten level, it is often difficult to determine which genre a piece of writing represents, and that is perfectly appropriate. Differentiating student writing by genres is a gradual process. Nevertheless, students in every grade need experience writing in a variety of genres, and schools and districts will typically make individual decisions about which genres to emphasize at which grade levels.

The state standard 1.5, Writing Dimensions, needs to be taught at the same time genres are taught because purpose, organization, details, and voice/tone are essential elements of all writing.

### Steps for Teaching a New Writing Genre

1. Students are immersed in the new genre. MANY examples are read to them and they spend as much time as possible reading examples of the new genre.
2. The teacher works with the students to identify the characteristics of the new genre and may create charts for classroom display that show these characteristics.
3. Teacher and students work on joint construction of texts in the genre through group writing.
4. Students produce solo efforts, for which (as often as possible) they choose the topic. Students conference with each other and with the teacher. Other aspects of process writing (e.g., revising, editing, and publishing) are employed.

(from <http://www.csu.org/community/adventure/teacher/steps.html>)

## Creating Benchmarks

It can be very worthwhile for a whole faculty to engage in a process of identifying benchmarks to be used school-wide or district-wide for improvement of student writing across the grades.

The process of teachers' looking together at student work, critiquing the work in relation to Vermont standards and rubrics, and selecting benchmark pieces from their own students' work is very powerful. We encourage schools to consider the exemplars in this guide only as an instructional resource and to create their own benchmarks for all grade levels, as follows:

- Have teachers use the rubrics and developmental progressions from this guide as a reference as they collect their own samples of student work that they believe meets the standard for their grade level. They may make copies of these writing samples to use in the process of selecting their own exemplars.
- Sort the writing samples into grade-level groups. Have each teacher independently rate each piece for the ways in which it does and does not meet grade level-appropriate expectations (see the developmental progressions in this guide) in relation to Vermont's rubrics.
- The pieces of writing that all teachers believe meet expectations in relation to the standard are selected.
- Using this smaller set of writing samples, teachers discuss the ways in which each piece of writing does and does not exemplify "meeting expectations in relation to the standard" for all of the dimensions on the Vermont rubrics. Those that fall short are set aside.
- Teachers discuss each of the remaining samples and work to decide which ones best represent "meeting the standard" for their grade level. These become benchmarks for that grade level.

In larger schools, it can be valuable to have teachers work in two (or more) groups, using the same sets of materials, to complete this process. Benchmark pieces emerging independently from two or more groups are likely to have the greatest integrity. It is useful to repeat this process for all writing genres, and it is also valuable to engage in this process regularly, over time.

The Annenberg Institute's *Looking at Student Work* Website (<http://www.lasw.org/>) provides excellent protocols, tools, and guidance to support teachers working together to look at student work.

## **Using Benchmarks/Exemplars in the Classroom**

Peggy Dorta, a teacher at the Underhill I.D. School, consistently offers students examples for the target skill she is presenting. For example, when working with transitions from one paragraph to another, she puts an example on the overhead that was very abrupt, and another that was a superb example of a smooth, effective transition. When she discussed an area for Response to Literature that had been lacking in many students' work, the benchmarks/exemplars she could share helped them see very clearly what the expectations were.

The use of benchmarks/exemplars in the classroom has many positive aspects:

- Adding clarity for expectations.
- Allowing the use of “real” samples for criteria/writing target skills that are a focus.
- Motivating children, since they absolutely love to have their piece be among the exemplary ones shared.
- Improving the precision of scoring a student's piece through comparing and contrasting it with benchmarks/exemplars.
- Strengthening the students' knowledge and use of writing rubrics.
- Helping teach students how to self-assess.

In addition, when discussing student work with colleagues, teachers find that exemplars or benchmarks add a valuable perspective for descriptors on a rubric, and sharing becomes easier.



## **Narrative Writing: Writing to Tell a Story**

### **Standard 1.9**

*In written narratives, students organize and relate a series of events, fictional or actual, in a coherent whole. This is evident when students (PreK-4):*

- a. Recount in sequence several parts of an experience or event, commenting on their significance and drawing a conclusion from them; or create an imaginative story with a clear story-line in which some events are clearly related to the resolution of a problem;*
- b. Use a dialogue and/or other strategies appropriate to narration;*
- c. Select details consistent with the intent of the story, omitting extraneous details.*

### **What Is a “Narrative”?**

A good narrative tells a story. It is not simply a collection of events (“and then...and then...and then”). Rather, it is focused on a certain controlling idea, usually involving some kind of conflict or problem to be resolved. It might be written to show the change in a character; it might be written to show the impact of a certain setting; it might be written to show the excitement or importance of a particular event. In any case, at the end of a good narrative the reader knows clearly what the “point” of the narrative is, and all the elements in it help support that point.

The most successful narratives zero in on some specific incident or moment. (Many students run into trouble in writing narratives when they take on too much and try to write a whole book or movie-length story!) Also, successful narratives are “weighted” effectively; i.e., the narrative concentrates its dialogue or other elaboration at the most important points of the story. Elaboration in narratives works better when it “shows” the reader what’s happening or what someone is feeling rather than “tells” the reader.

### **Sample Assignments**

Below are some suggested types of assignments. They are not grade-level specific, but they are meant to be used as guides and adapted as necessary. A range of examples is included; some are more appropriate for the earlier grades and others more appropriate for the later grades in the K-4 range. Although the sample assignments “speak” to the student, they are not presented below in a form to copy and distribute to students. Instead, they are provided as examples for the teacher. Additional examples of instructional materials are included in Appendix A of this guide.

#### *Non-content area narratives*

#### **Sample One: Personal Narrative**

Tell a story about something that happened to you in real life or make believe (controlling idea). Focus on the parts that were really important to you (elaboration) and write how you felt when that part was happening (voice/tone).

- Think about a place you visited with the class and write about the best part of the trip.
- Write about a favorite day.

- Write about your best birthday, and think about what made it the best.
- Tell a story about getting a pet and how you felt about that.
- Tell about when you did something bad, what happened, and how you felt.

### **Sample Two: Fictional Narrative**

Think of a character in a story you know well and write about how the character feels.

#### **Examples**

- Write an imaginary story about entering a haunted house and how you were able to escape again.
- Write a story about a day in the life of your pet, from his or her point of view.

*Narratives as part of content area assignments.*

### **Sample Three: Social Studies**

Write about a school visit to a sugarhouse and draw a conclusion about the importance of maple sugaring in Vermont.

### **Sample Four: Social Studies**

After studying a particular historical event or period, write a series of diary entries that highlight some aspect of the experience through the eyes of one person involved in it.

### **Sample Five: Science**

Write a narrative about a fictional alien, how it has adapted to a real planet, and what happened to it there.

*Your Turn!*

Think of several assignments that would help your student meet the standard for narratives. Be as specific as you can in the prompt or content area, and also in whatever teaching, modeling, or scaffolding you might use.

**VERMONT NEW STANDARDS RUBRIC FOR NARRATIVE WRITING: WRITING TO TELL A STORY**  
 Standard 1.9 In written narratives, students organize and relate a series of events, fictional or actual, in a coherent whole.  
*This rubric is adapted from materials created by the New Standards Project.*

Criteria	Score Point 5 Exceeds the Standard	Score Point 4 Accomplished Writing	Score Point 3 Intermediate Writing	Score Point 2 Basic Writing	Score Point 1 Limited Writing
<p><i>CONTEXT, PURPOSE</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes situation, point of view, conflict, and plot, as necessary</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>NARRATIVE STRATEGIES: VOICE /TONE AND ELABORATION (Details)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Showing the character in action</li> <li>Using dialogue to reveal character and advance action</li> <li>Dramatizing scenes</li> <li>Managing time through straightforward chronology, flashbacks, episodes and transition, or foreshadowing</li> <li>Providing character motivation</li> <li>Developing suspense</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE</b></p>	<p><b>Score point 5 meets all the criteria in score point 4. In addition, a paper receiving this score renders a particularly dramatic recreation of events.</b></p> <p><b>Shows insight into the characters' motivation and the significance of the events (purpose).</b></p> <p><b>Uses lively and concrete language; e.g., similes and metaphors (detail/voice/tone).</b></p> <p><b>Some language and images may invite readers to reflect on the significance of the events (voice/tone).</b></p> <p><b>Reveals a strong individual voice.</b></p> <p><b>Uses a variety of sentence structures and length purposefully (voice/tone).</b></p>	<p><b>Establishes the situation by setting the action of the story within a clearly defined time and place (purpose).</b></p> <p><b>Presents main characters effectively.</b></p> <p><b>Maintains clear topic and focus (purpose).</b></p> <p><b>Narrator may reflect on the importance of events (purpose).</b></p> <p><b>Creates a believable world, real or fictional, developing action by dramatizing rather than telling what happens (detail).</b></p> <p><b>Develops characters through effective use of dialogue, action, behavior, or relationships with other characters (detail).</b></p> <p><b>Shows character growth or change or comments on significance of experience.</b></p> <p><b>Relevant, concrete details enable readers to imagine the world of the story or experience.</b></p> <p><b>Organized in a dramatic /effective way.</b></p> <p><b>Has an engaging beginning and moves through a series of events to a logical, satisfying ending (organization).</b></p>	<p>Establishes adequate context.</p> <p>Presents characters in a somewhat stereotypical fashion.</p> <p>Relies on a narrow range of strategies to develop story-line.</p> <p>Some strategies, such as dialogue, used with effectiveness (detail).</p> <p>Some details may be generic, but they advance action and describe characters' personalities and actions.</p> <p>Generally uses predictable language (voice/tone).</p> <p>May vary sentence length and type (voice/tone).</p> <p>Presents characters and events in such a way that readers can easily follow the story-line (organization).</p> <p>Has a clear beginning, middle, and end.</p> <p>Ending may rely on external events rather than on characters' decisions or actions.</p>	<p>May give vague sense of context (purpose).</p> <p>Identifies characters.</p> <p>Establishes story topic; attempts focus (purpose).</p> <p>May use some dialogue (detail).</p> <p>May have problems with pacing.</p> <p>May list rather than develop relevant detail or character traits. Characters are often stereotypes, lacking motivation (detail).</p> <p>Some inappropriate word choices (voice/tone).</p> <p>Little variety of sentence structure or length (voice/tone).</p> <p>Relies on straightforward "and then" chronology (organization).</p> <p>May lack effective beginning and/or ending or have an abrupt conclusion (organization).</p> <p>May present characters and the sequence of events in a predictable way (organization).</p>	<p>Little or no context presented (purpose).</p> <p>May list characters.</p> <p>Presents topic; no focus.</p> <p>May list some generic details in haphazard order.</p> <p>May not describe characters (detail).</p> <p>Little attention to word choice (voice/tone).</p> <p>Usually short, simple sentences (voice/tone).</p> <p>May have major gaps in coherence.</p>

Score Point 0 Unscorable There is no evidence of an attempt to write a narrative piece.

## Glossary for Narratives

**Coherence** – The arrangement of ideas in such a way that the reader can easily move from one point to another. When all ideas are arranged and connected, a piece of writing has coherence.

**Context** - The set of facts or circumstances surrounding an event or a situation in a piece of literature.

**Elaboration** – The words used to describe, persuade, explain, or in some way support the main idea; to be effective, details should be vivid, colorful, and appealing to the senses. Details can be descriptive, sensory, and/or reflective.

**Focus** – The concentration on a specific topic to give it emphasis or clarity.

**Pacing** – The rate of movement and action of the story. The story may take a long time to build to the climax or end abruptly.

**Stereotype** – A pattern or form that does not change. A character is “stereotyped” if she or he has no individuality and fits a mold.

**Tone** – The overall feeling or effect created by a writer’s attitude and use of words. This feeling may be serious, mock-serious, humorous, sarcastic, solemn, objective, etc.

**Topic** – The specific subject covered in a piece of writing.

**Voice** – The style and quality of the writing. Voice portrays the author’s personality or the personality of a chosen persona. A distinctive voice establishes personal expression and enhances the writing.

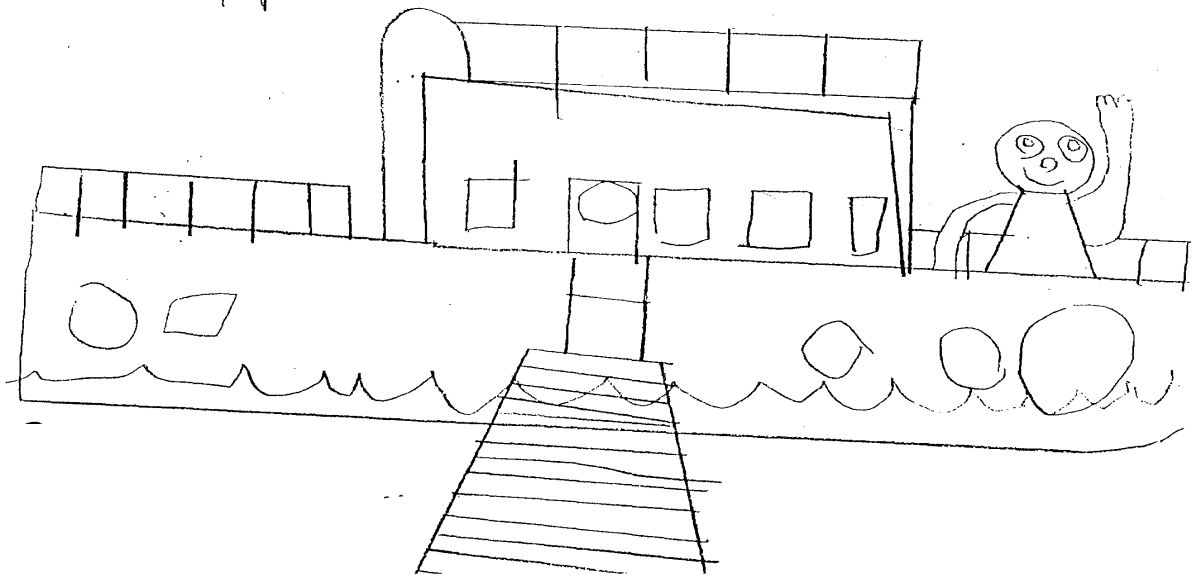
K-4 Progression: Narratives					
Standard 1.9: In written narratives, students organize and relate a series of events, fictional or actual, in a coherent whole.					
Criteria	K	1	2	3	4
<b>PURPOSE</b> <b>TOPIC/FOCUS</b> <b>STANCE</b> *Context *Setting *Problem/Conflict	*Independently writes complete phrases or sentence. *Thought conveyed through “story”/“action”	*Includes a title. *May list/name characters/ events *Independently writes 3 or more clear complete sentences telling outline of story.	*Includes a title. *Presents characters and events but uses little or no context. *Presents outline of a story, including a problem and solution.	*Includes a title. *Presents outline of a story, including a problem and solution. *May give vague sense of context. *Identifies characters within context. *Establishes consistent story content.	*Includes a title. *Presents an outline of a story. *May give vague sense of context. *Identifies characters within context. *Establishes consistent story content.
<b>ORGANIZATION</b> *Overall coherence *Sequential chronology *Flashbacks *Transitions		*Sequential order or short, simple sentences. *May still have major gaps in coherence.	*Piece is longer, and includes a beginning, middle, and end. *Usually short simple sentences move the story forward. *May have gaps in coherence.	*Coherent organization. *Uses some transitions. *Has beginning, middle, and end. *Beginning or ending may need work to be effective. *May rely on straightforward “and then” chronology.	*Coherent organization. *Beginning or ending may need work in order to be effective. *Uses some transitions. *May have problems with pacing. *Relies on straightforward “and then” chronology.
<b>VOICE/TONE</b> *Sentence variety *Word choice			*Attention to word choice.	*Some variety in sentence structure. *May have some inappropriate word choice.	*May have some inappropriate word choice. *Some variety in sentence structure.
<b>DETAILS</b> *Naming *Describing *Explaining *Dialogue used to reveal characters/ advance action *Providing character motivation	*Details in writing or picture. *Independently labels picture	*Some random details included and may not be related to story outline. *Details in text with some naming and describing. *May include picture that supports text.	*Begins to consider what audience needs for understanding. *Details included are related to the story-line.	*May use some dialogue. *Details are understandable and create images.	*May use some dialogue. *Selects details relevant to story. *Details create images. *May be “tell not show” details.

## Exemplars of Narrative Writing

On the next pages you will find exemplars of narrative writing for grades K-4. An **exemplar** is a piece of work that demonstrates a certain group's common agreement about what constitutes quality. Each exemplar has been typed for uniformity, and each is accompanied by commentary that relates to the new standards rubric and the developmental progression presented earlier in this document.

Grade Level	Title	Page Number
Kindergarten	<i>Waving to my Family</i>	15
	<i>Pepper Is Black</i>	16
First Grade	<i>Overnight Five Boys</i>	17
	<i>My First Grade Story</i>	17
Second Grade	<i>A Girl Named Olivia!</i>	18
	<i>Little Tracker</i>	18
Third Grade	<i>The Bad Accident</i>	19
	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	20
Fourth Grade	<i>One Hot Summer Day</i>	21

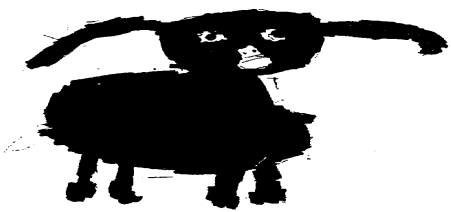
I'M ON-A BOT-WAVING  
TO-MY-FEMLY



I M - ON-A BOT-WAVING TO-MY-FEMLY

Complete sentence conveys  
"story"/"action"... thought.  
Picture supports text.

PEPPER IS BLAK  
 I FO HR GOOEY  
 (I throw her chewy)



PEPPER is Blak  
 IFO HR GOOEY  
 (I throw her chewy)

Two line of "story."  
 Lines are connected text.  
 Picture supports texts.



### Overnight Five Boys

One night 5 boys were outside and it started to rain so they ran inside a haunted house. They turned around and there was a monster with 5,000 hands and 6,000 eyes.

Story with beginning, middle, and end. All details consistent with intent of story.

They were so scared of the monster they ran outside and never came back. To be continued.

### My First Grade Story

I met Scott and Stephen and Brendan when I came to school. Then I knew them. We played soccer. Then we played tag and I was it. Then we sat together at lunch. I invited them over to my house. They stayed overnight. Then they went home.

Naming detail.

Personal narrative telling about his friends.

Sequential order of sentences.

Outlines a story of how they became friends. All details on story.

### A Girl Named Olivia!

A little girl named Olivia was going swimming. She rode her bike to the bridges. She was hot and she was riding her bike and wanted to swim. At 1:00 non on Sat. July 12<sup>th</sup> 1998. But thar was one problem her bike fell all apart and she couldn't get it all together again. But she had a little bit of money left in her pocket and she had remederd about the bus. She payed the man and got home safely.

Sets context.

Problem.

Names character, sets context, gives problem, and ends with resolution of problem. Tight organization. No sentences can be moved. Sequential and logical progression of ideas.

### Little Tracker

One day I was walking in the woods and I saw a bear. I chasd it until I was a house. It was a candy house. I was just a bout to eat a piece and I saw it had a trap. So I nocked on the door. A lady open the door and said COME IN COME IN then she gave me cookies. That night I saw the lady take mosterblod from the kitchen and put it in a pot. In the morning she made me eat it. After I ate it my stomick hert. I looked downm my stomick was growing hair my hands turnd into claws. I looked at my body and I was a M,M,M,M,M,M,M,M,M,M, MONSTER!

Explaining details.

Uses detail to help reader understand story-line.

Opening gives setting. Middle section shows action and problem. Story ends with humor.

Details relate to story-line. Tight organization; all sentences clearly related.

### The Bad Accident

Two mornings ago I was playing tag when I ran in to Tony. It happened when I was running around the corner of the cabin on the school playground. Then Tony went around the other corner and then we crashed. He had a purple eye because I accidentally hit Tony in the eye with my elbow. After the teacher came over to us and asked "What happened? We told her then Tony went in the office. They got Tony some ice for his eye and then I whispered sorry to him. The next day Tony had a yellow eye. Then one day my mom came to my class room. She asked Tony what happened. He told her.

When my mom was talking to Mrs. Dodge I questioned Tony, "are you feeling better"? He replied yes. In conclusion I am careful when I go around corners.

Tight organization.  
Sentences cannot be rearranged. Details support reader's understanding of story.

First paragraph sets context, settings, and situation.

Visual detail.

Uses dialogue.

Christmas Eve

One Christmas Eve we were going to church to sing carols. Well let me tell you my story. We were on a icy narrow back road suddenly we saw two cars off the road. They were big percy truck and a little sporty red car. We started down a little hill and started spinning round and round. I screamed. My sister Brittany had a sharp and pointy hair clip in her hair and she through her head against the seat and the hair clip dug right into her head. I said "Are you alright"...All she said was that dumb hair clip!!!! She started weeping so hard I had to crawl in the back seat to help her. We could not get out of the ditch. Luckily somebody came along to pick us up in their car. After a couple of miles we got to the church. We were late!!!!

When we got there we just started singing. At the end of church some of my friends said, "Have a safe trip home" and all I just said was "hopefully". And to all the people who are reading this story safe driving and Merry Christmas!!!!

Shows use of transitions.

Clear voice.

Lots of visual details.

Tight organization.

Sentences cannot be rearranged. Details support reader's understanding of story.

Use of dialogue.

Voice/tone – humor.

One Hot Summer Day

One hot summer day when the birds were singing, and kids were playing, I was in my room. My mom was cooking. Then she received a call. It was my dad. When my mom hung up the telephone, she said, "dad has been laid off of work".

Establishes problem.

My dad sold beer wine and seltzer water. A few minutes later, my dad came home. I ran outside and gave my dad a big hug. It felt good. Then he started to cry on my shoulder I said, "dad I am really really sorry about what happened to your job.

Then we went inside. My dad had a company car so we had to give it back to the company in three days.

Dialogue used effectively to advance story.

The next day, when I got home my dad said, "Son, this is going to be very hard."

# Response to Literature

## Standard 1.7

*In written responses to literature, students show understanding of reading; connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues; and make judgments about the text. This is evident when students (PreK-4):*

- a. Connect plot/ideas/concepts to experience, including other literature;*
- b. Go beyond retelling of plot by reflecting on what is read and making connections to broader ideas, concepts, and issues;*
- c. Support judgments about what has been read by drawing from experience, other literature, and evidence from the text, including direct quotations.*

### What Is a “Response to Literature”?

Like a report, a good response to literature is evidence of clear thinking about a particular text or texts. A good response is more than a summary. Whether it is a straightforward literary analysis or a form of personal response, it always uses a controlling idea/focus to analyze some aspect of the text. It needs to establish enough context about the text so that anyone (not just the teacher who gave the assignment) can make sense of the piece and follow the writer’s thinking. A good response to literature elaborates on its controlling idea with frequent references to the text itself, using direct quotes from the text when appropriate.

### Sample Assignments

Literary analysis/character

#### Sample One: Fiction

In a text read by the whole class or group, analyze a particular character, focusing on his/her most important qualities and using direct evidence from the text to find proof. (Topic and controlling idea.)

#### Examples

- After reading *Noisy Nora*, by Rosemary Wells, ask what kind of person is Noisy Nora (controlling idea)? Show proof from the text (elaboration) and tell how you are like or not like her.
- Find proof from the text that the fisherman’s wife was discontented.

Literary Analysis/Looking at a text's "big idea"

**Sample Two: Fiction**

After reading as a class the book *Tight Times*, by Barbara Shook Hazen, think about the big idea or Text to World connection. (The power of love can get you through the hard "tight" times.) Use proof from the text to show how this is true.

Literary analysis/Looking at a text's "big ideas"

**Sample Three: Fiction**

After reading *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen, discuss why the duckling finds the swans noble. In your class discussion you will have defined *noble* and talked about examples. Then ask students to respond to the following.

How is the Ugly Duckling noble? (Topic and controlling idea.) Find evidence from the text (elaboration).

Literary analysis /Looking closely at a quote from the text

**Sample Four: Poetry**

Look at the words below. Discuss with the class what the passage means, and what it shows about cats. Spend time talking and discussing the poem. Then have students respond in writing why it would be fun to be a Jellicle cat. Have them find some things in the poem that help them to answer.

***The Song of the Jellicles***

by T.S. Eliot

*Jellicle Cats come out to-night  
Jellicle Cats come one come all;  
The Jellicle Moon is shining bright-  
Jellicles come to the Jellicle Ball.*

*Jellicle Cats are black and white.  
Jellicle Cats are rather small;  
Jellicle Cats are merry and bright,  
And pleasant to hear when they caterwaul.  
Jellicle Cats have cheerful faces,  
Jellicle Cats have bright black eyes;  
They like to practise their airs and graces  
And wait for the Jellicle Moon to rise.*

Personal response

**Sample Five: Fiction or NonFiction**

Describe a character in a text, and then compare the character to someone you know well. (Be sure to show students how to integrate direct references/quotes from the text into this type of response.)

Your Turn!

Think of several assignments that would help your students meet the standard for response to literature. Be as specific as you can in the text, the assignment, and whatever teaching, modeling, or scaffolding you might use to help your students.



**VERMONT NEW STANDARDS RUBRIC FOR RESPONSES TO LITERATURE**

Standard 1.7 In responses to literature, students show understanding of reading, connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues, and make judgments about the text.

*This rubric is adapted from materials created by the New Standards Project.*

Criteria	Score Point 5 Exceeds the Standard	Score Point 4 Accomplished Writing	Score Point 3 Intermediate Writing	Score Point 2 Basic Writing	Score Point 1 Limited Writing
<p><b>PURPOSE, STANCE, VOICE/TONE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of understanding and reflection that are related to the literature</li> <li>Analysis of the elements of the work under consideration</li> <li>Personal response to the work of literature</li> <li>Sentence structure, variety, and vocabulary</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall coherence</li> <li>Information and ideas presented in logical, cohesive fashion</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>ELABORATION STRATEGIES, DETAILS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific, concrete details with appropriate citations from text to support writer's point of view</li> <li>Comparing</li> <li>Explaining writer's response to the work</li> </ul>	<p>Score point 5 meets all the criteria listed in score point 4 and shows invention, creativity, and lucidity.</p> <p>Presents insightful ideas.</p> <p>Demonstrates strong sense of personal engagement in responding to the work of literature.</p> <p>Sophisticated sentence structure and imagery; language is often metaphorical or otherwise distinctive.</p> <p>Not only logical and coherent, but organized so that the writer's own ideas are clearly related to specific points in the work of literature.</p> <p>Elaborates using striking imagery or metaphors.</p>	<p><b>Responds directly to the work of literature with analysis and personal response.</b></p> <p><b>Strong control of purpose, appropriate to topic and audience.</b></p> <p><b>Clearly establishes context (purpose).</b></p> <p><b>Uses effective sentence patterns and diction (voice/tone).</b></p> <p><b>Has clear, consistent coherence and organization.</b></p> <p><b>Elaborates using concrete language and details.</b></p> <p><b>Writer supports ideas with specific references to text (detail).</b></p> <p><b>References to text are supported by specific citations (detail).</b></p>	<p>Responds to the work of literature, providing some evidence of analysis and personal response.</p> <p>Sense of purpose may be uneven or confined to providing a summary.</p> <p>Context limited to that of a book report or personal response (purpose).</p> <p>Uses appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure (voice/tone).</p> <p>Organizes ideas appropriate to topic and purpose (organization).</p> <p>Ideas are elaborated effectively, using some specific, concrete details.</p> <p>Elaboration may not be clearly related to the text (detail).</p> <p>References to text are general, or may not be supported by citations(detail).</p>	<p>Responds to the work of literature with a general summary or retelling and may have little evidence of analysis (purpose).</p> <p>Response to text may show some misunderstanding.</p> <p>Attempts to establish a context (purpose).</p> <p>Ideas usually consist of generalities.</p> <p>Vocabulary and sentence structure are generally pedestrian and generic (voice/tone).</p> <p>Shows coherence, but may have minor digressions (organization).</p> <p>Sufficiently organized for reader to follow ideas (organization).</p> <p>Shows little purposeful use of strategies for elaboration (detail).</p> <p>Elaboration may be limited to lists of details or generalities.</p> <p>May not make specific reference to text (detail).</p>	<p>Responds to the work of literature with little or no analysis. Misunderstood or incomplete retelling (purpose).</p> <p>No context (purpose).</p> <p>Uses basic vocabulary and simple sentences; may have some inappropriate word choices (voice/tone).</p> <p>Shows little or no evidence of purposeful organization. May be brief or, in longer papers, lack coherence.</p> <p>Reader may not be able to follow writer's line of thinking (organization).</p> <p>No attempt to elaborate or may attempt to elaborate by repetition of initial statement (detail).</p>

**Score Point 0 Unscorable** There is no attempt to respond to a work of literature.

## Glossary for Responses to Literature

**Analysis** – A separating of a whole into its parts with an examination of these parts to find out their nature and function.

**Citation** – A direct quote from the text.

**Coherence** – The quality achieved when all the ideas are clearly arranged and connected.

**Context** – The set of facts for circumstances surrounding an event or situation.

**Diction** – The writer's choice of words taking into account on their effectiveness.

**Elaboration** – The development or expansion of ideas and arguments. Both logical (evidence, reasons, facts, and statistics) and emotional appeals can be used.

**Focus** – The concentration on a specific topic to give it emphasis or clarity.

**Occasion** – The happening or event that makes the response possible.

**Pedestrian** – Commonplace; usual.

**Purpose** – The specific reason for writing; the goal of the writing (to entertain, express, inform, explain, persuade, etc.). Purpose has to do with the topic the writer is addressing; its central ideas, theme, or message.

**Reference to Text** – Mentioning or alluding to something in the text without directly quoting the text (e.g., Pip was frightened when he met the convict in the graveyard.)

**Retelling** – a restatement of the events in the story.

**Stance** – the attitude or position of the writer.

**Thesis** – A sentence that announces the writer's main, unifying, controlling idea about a topic.

**Tone** – The writer's attitude toward the subject. This can be serious, sarcastic, solemn, objective, tongue-in-cheek, etc.

**Topic** – The specific subject covered in a piece of writing.

**Voice** – The style and quality of the writing. Voice portrays the personality of the author or a persona. A distinctive voice establishes personal expression and enhances the writing.

## K-4 Progression: Responses to Literature

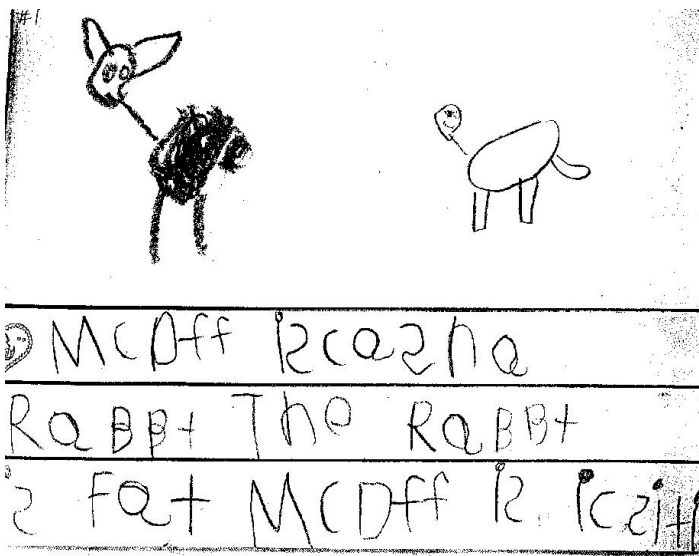
Standard 1.7 - In responses to literature, students show understanding of reading, connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues, and make judgments about the text.

Criteria	K	1	2	3	4
<p><b>PURPOSE, STANCE, VOICE/TONE</b>                      *Evidence of understanding and reflection that are related to the literature                      *Analysis of the elements of the work under consideration                      *Personal response to the work of literature                      *Sentence structure, variety, and vocabulary</p>	<p>*Uses writing to re-enact and tell stories.                      *With prompting, dictates 1-3 sentences.                      *Uses picture and print to convey response.</p>	<p>*Includes a title.                      *Responds to the text with 3+ complete sentences, with little analysis.</p>	<p>*Includes a title.                      *Responds to the text with a general summary or retelling and may have some evidence of analysis                      *Ideas consist of generalities.                      *Response to the text may show some misunderstanding.</p>	<p>*Includes a title.                      *Responds to the text providing some evidence of analysis and personal response.                      *Sense of purpose may be uneven.                      *Context limited to that of book report or personal response.                      *Uses appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure.</p>	<p>*Includes a title                      *Responds directly to text with analysis and personal response                      *Strong control of purpose, appropriate to topic and audience.                      *Clearly establishes context (purpose).                      *Uses effective sentence patterns and diction (voice/tone)</p>
<p><b>ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE</b>                      *Overall coherence                      *Information and ideas presented in logical, coherent fashion</p>	<p>*Sentences could be rearranged without affecting piece.</p>	<p>*May be brief, or in longer papers may lack coherence.                      *Sequential order of sentences.</p>	<p>*Shows coherence but may have minor digressions.                      *Uses a variety of transition words.</p>	<p>*Begins to develop analysis and personal response with topic sentences supported by related sentences</p>	<p>*Has clear consistent coherence and organization.</p>
<p><b>ELABORATION, STRATEGIES, AND DETAILS</b>                      *Specific concrete details with appropriate citations from text to support writer's point of view                      *Comparing                      *Explaining writer's response to the work</p>	<p>*Picture may carry details to support writing.</p>	<p>*No attempt to elaborate, or haphazard details included.                      *Repetition of initial statement.                      *May have some inappropriate word choices.                      *Includes generic written detail.</p>	<p>*Elaboration may be limited to lists of details or generalities.                      *Usually short, simple sentences.                      *Little attention to word choice. May have pale, generic vocabulary.                      *May not make specific references to text.</p>	<p>*Ideas are effectively elaborated using some specific, concrete, relevant details.                      *Details provide what audience needs for understanding.                      *References to text may be general and may not be supported by citations.</p>	<p>*Elaborates using concrete language and details.                      *Writer supports ideas with detailed references to text.                      *References to text are supported with specific citations (details).</p>

## Exemplars of Responses to Literature

On the next pages you will find exemplars of responses to literature for grades K-4. An **exemplar** is a piece of work that demonstrates a certain group's common agreement about what constitutes quality. Each exemplar has been typed for uniformity, and each is accompanied by commentary that relates to the new standards rubric and the developmental progression for Responses to Literature presented earlier in this document.

<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
	Responses to:	
Kindergarten	<i>McDuff Is Catching a Rabbit</i>	29
First Grade	No exemplar located	
Second Grade	<i>Ansi and the Moss-Covered Rock</i>	30
Third Grade	<i>Cricket in Times Square</i>	31
Fourth Grade	<i>Trouble River</i>	32



McDuff is casha a RaBBt The RaBBt is Fat  
McDuff is icsiti

McDuff is chasing the rabbit. The rabbit is  
fat. McDuff is excited.

Response to *McDuff Comes Home*

Uses writing to re-enact/tell story.

Uses pictures and print to convey retelling.

Sentences could be rearranged without changing meaning.

Response to *Ansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* by Eric A. Kimmel

Ansai stories are African stories.

In the story *Ansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, Ansi is a smart spider.

He is smart because he tricked the other animals by making them say the magic word. Then he stole their fruit.

If Ansi came to my house I would not listen to him. I would trick him like the Bush Deer did. If I was Bush Deer I would have to talk with him and work it out.

Ansai is smart and tricky.

Introduction sets context and focus.

Evidence from text supports focus of “tricky.”

Personal connection.

Response to *Cricket in Times Square* by  
George Selden

In *The Cricket in Times Square* Tucker, a mouse, meets a cricket named Chester. Tucker lives in a NYC subway station. He makes friends with Chester Cricket who has newly arrived in NYC. In this story Tucker is a great friend to Chester.

First, Tucker brings Chester Cricket food. We see this when Chester first comes. Tucker brings Chester liverwurst. We also see Tucker bringing Chester food when they have a party to celebrate Chester's second month in NYC.

Most important Tucker is a great friend to Chester because he makes it possible for Chester to learn new songs. We see this when he turns the dial until he gets a song. Then Chester is able to learn new songs.

This is important because he is able to repay Mario's kindness. Now the Bellinis would not be poor.

By bringing him food and helping him learn new songs, Tucker Mouse is showing Chester Cricket how much he cares about him.

Introduction establishes a context and focus.

Evidence from text supports focus.

Interprets evidence.

Conclusion restates focus.

Response to *Trouble River*

Trouble River is a book about a pioneer boy named Dewey and his grandma. They are forced to escape down the river on Dewey's homemade raft when Indian's attack. Dewey is the most interesting character in the book because he is brave, resourceful, and determined.

Introduction establishes context and focus.

First of all, Dewey is brave. For example he tries to scare the Indians away from the cabin even if he might get hurt. Another time Dewey shows he is brave when he takes his Grandma out in a raft he's never steered before down Trouble River where whole wagons have gone down in the quicksand!

Evidence from text supports focus.

Dewey is also resourceful. This can be seen when he earns money by picking up bones and selling them to buy nails for his raft. It is also apparent when he makes a raft out of logs and rawhide without any help from anyone.

Most importantly Dewey is determined. He shows this when he is determined to get to the Dargan's and then to Hunter City, where he knows he and his grandma will be safe.

In conclusion, Dewey is the most interesting character in the book. He is brave, resourceful, and determined. Trouble River is a book that is hard to put down. It is interesting, exciting, and full of suspense. As a reader, I could feel Dewey's determination to make it down Trouble River alive.

Personal connection relates to focus.



## Report: Writing to Inform Standard 1.8

*In written reports, students organize and convey information and ideas accurately and effectively.*

### What Is a “Report?”

A good report is written to inform, but is more than a collection of facts or information about a particular subject. Rather, a report is evidence of clear thinking about that particular subject. It is intended to inform the reader but it informs from a particular perspective or controlling idea and chooses information to support that controlling idea. In this way, a good report often shows some elements of analysis or even persuasion.

A report may involve research on the part of the writer (Go to the library and find out about seals, then write a report explaining how well-adapted they are to their environment.”). Sometimes, on the other hand, the report shows how well the writer has synthesized classroom instruction (“Now that we have studied seals together, write a report explaining how well-adapted they are to their environment.”).

A good report uses only information that supports its focus or the point it is making, and it goes into enough depth with that information to inform its intended audience. This elaboration may take many forms, e.g., description, comparison, examples, scenarios, review of history, direct quotes from primary and secondary sources, etc.

### Approach

- Introduce expository structures to students by reading various resources in all subject areas.
- When reading informative text, focus students’ attention on the structure and organization of ideas.
- A shared experience, students’ interests, or a unit or topic of study in any subject area should provide the topic for collaborative writing and reporting activities.
- With students, determine an appropriate topic.
- **Brainstorm, categorize, and web** what is known about the topic.
- Have students consider the audience and purpose to determine the appropriate content and format of the report.
- **Sequence** main ideas and supporting details, incorporating sub-headings if appropriate.
- Collaboratively prepare a draft by developing charted ideas into sentences and paragraphs.
- Develop focus and controlling idea.
- Read the draft and discuss the clarity of the information conveyed.
- Revise the draft, incorporating students’ suggestions.

- Edit, proofread, and prepare the final draft or copy.
- Have students prepare any accompanying visuals.
- Share, display, or present the final version to appropriate audiences.

**Teacher Note:**

- Classroom resource collections should include expository text.
- Daily **reading-to-students** sessions should include expository as well as narrative selections.
- Elementary students should gradually become aware of the structures and language of expository text. Common organizational patterns of expository text include:
  - **Description** - features or characteristics of the topic are described. Some examples may be provided.
  - **Sequence** - events or items are listed or ordered chronologically.
  - **Comparison** - the subject or topic is compared and contrasted with other things or events.
  - **Cause and Effect** - the author explains the cause of an event and the result.
  - **Problem and Solution** - a question is presented and solutions are proposed.
- Students should have opportunities to orally express ideas and understandings before being expected to convey information in writing.
- During the Emerging Phase, students should have opportunities to inform others by dictating, drawing and writing their ideas.

Abstracted from Saskatchewan Education (1992). *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level*. Regina, SK: Saskatchewan Education.

**Sample Assignments**

**Sample One: Science**

As part of a unit on paleontology, write a report about why Pteranodon died out (topic, controlling idea). Show how Pteranodon died out (elaboration).

**Sample Two: Art**

As part of a unit studying famous artists, write a report about the artist of your choice.

- Do **not** ask students to “write all about Leonardo da Vinci.”
- Do ask students to show how Leonardo da Vinci’s work prophesied the scientific future.

**Sample Three: Social Studies**

As part of a unit studying Vermont, write a report on Vermont. Focus the writing. The controlling idea might be an idea or problem that shaped Vermont.

**Sample Four: Social Studies**

After reading *Happy Birthday Martin Luther King*, write a report that shows how King was a leader who exemplified democratic values.

**Sample Five: Social Studies**

As part of a unit on ancient Egypt, write a report on some aspects of Egyptian society.

- Do **not** ask students to “write a report on something about ancient Egypt.”
- Do ask students to explain how the Nile River influenced many aspects of ancient Egyptian life.

**VERMONT NEW STANDARDS RUBRIC FOR REPORTS: WRITING TO INFORM**  
 Standard 1.8 In written reports, students organize and convey information and ideas accurately and effectively.  
*This rubric is adapted from materials created by the New Standards Project.*

Criteria	Score Point 5 Exceeds the Standard	Score Point 4 Accomplished Writing	Score Point 3 Intermediate Writing	Score Point 2 Basic Writing	Score Point 1 Limited Writing	Score Point 0 Unscorable There is no evidence of an attempt to write a report.
<p>PURPOSE, STANCE <b>VOICE/TONE</b> <i>(Controlling Idea)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of gathered information</li> <li>Analysis of a situation followed by a suggested course of action</li> <li>Prediction of possible outcomes of a situation</li> <li>Appropriate stance</li> <li>Anticipation of reader needs</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate patterns: chronological; historical; specific to general; general to specific; causal; sequential; other, appropriate for specific report</li> <li>Overall coherence</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>ELABORATION STRATEGIES, DETAILS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using specific, concrete strategies</li> <li>Comparing, contrasting</li> <li>Naming, describing</li> <li>Reporting conversation</li> <li>Reviewing the history</li> <li>Explaining the possibilities</li> <li>Creating a scenario</li> </ul>	<p>Meets all the criteria listed in score point 4 and uses strategies not always thought of for reporting information – e.g., personal anecdotes or dramatization impart information in an entertaining way.</p> <p>Precise use of language conveys intent clearly and concisely.</p> <p>The writer may reflect on the significance of the information.</p> <p>Shows an exceptional awareness of readers’ concerns and needs.</p> <p>May demonstrate an unusual pattern or framework in which to embed information.</p> <p>The writer is extremely selective in presenting information, including relevant material and excluding that which would clutter the report.</p>	<p><b>A sense of purpose stated strongly or implied, unifies and focuses the report.</b></p> <p><b>Shows a clear sense of direction appropriate to its purpose.</b></p> <p><b>Stance is that of a knowledgeable person presenting relevant information (voice/tone).</b></p> <p><b>Context is clear throughout.</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Organized in a pattern or framework suited to purpose, audience, and context.</b></p> <p><b>Strong overall coherence and balance; uses transitions. Tight construction without extraneous material.</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Compelling opening, strong informative body, and satisfying conclusion (organization).</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Uses a variety of elaboration strategies effectively and appropriately; cites references as needed. Details are relevant to the topic, purpose, and audience.</b></p> <p><b>Provides depth of information.</b></p>	<p>States controlling idea/focus but may not use it effectively to unify report.</p> <p>Shows evidence of having a general rather than a focused purpose in presenting information.</p> <p>Stance is that of a person who has a desire to convey gathered information but whose sense of audience is vague (voice/tone).</p> <p>Establishes sufficient context.</p> <p>Generally uses a predictable pattern.</p> <p>Has overall coherence; uses some transitions.</p> <p>Clear beginning, middle, and end; may provide considerable information.</p> <p>General information, not well supported by concrete examples.</p> <p>Some information may be irrelevant.</p>	<p>Defines subject with a simple statement rather than controlling idea/focus.</p> <p>Conveys a lack of evident purpose.</p> <p>May be a monotone (voice/tone).</p> <p>May offer little context.</p> <p>Usually shows an organized plan but may have digressions.</p> <p>Has general coherence, stays on topic, but may show weak transitions between paragraphs or sentences.</p> <p>May have a lengthy opening and abrupt closure; may present random bits of information.</p> <p>Relies on general rather than specific details. May use irrelevant details, often presented in a list.</p> <p>May rely on opinion rather than facts.</p>	<p>May only state topic.</p> <p>Rarely conveys writer’s intent.</p> <p>Monotone (voice/tone).</p> <p>Stance is undeveloped.</p> <p>Seems unaware of reader concerns or needs; no context.</p> <p>Shows little or no evidence of purposeful organization.</p> <p>May lack coherence; no transitions.</p> <p>Random, disconnected, and/or unfocused opinions with some scattered facts.</p> <p>Presents very little information.</p>	

**Note:** A report should not be an “everything you wanted to know about...” paper. It should have a topic with a controlling idea/focus that controls the entire work.

## **Glossary for Reports**

**Citations** - Acknowledgment and documentation of sources of information.

**Context** - The set of facts or circumstances surrounding an event or a situation.

**Coherence** - The arrangement of ideas in such a way that the reader can easily move from one point to another. High-quality writing is achieved when all ideas are logically integrated, arranged, connected, and clearly articulated.

**Controlling Idea** - The main idea that runs throughout the paper.

**Elaboration** - The development and expansion of ideas, characters, and descriptions through addition of the right details; to be effective, details should be vivid, be colorful, and appeal to the senses. Details can be descriptive, sensory, and/or reflective.

**Focus** - The concentration on a specific topic to give it emphasis or clarity.

**Monotone** - Writing that is without style, manner, or color. It reflects a sameness of words and tone without variation and becomes monotonous to read.

**Purpose** - The basic purpose of a report is to inform readers, to share facts, details, insights and conclusions about the topic.

**Stance** - The attitude or position of the author.

**Thesis** - A statement of the purpose, intent, or main idea. It is the writer's unifying, controlling idea about a topic. A thesis statement usually contains two main elements: a subject (e.g., the Internet) and the specific stance, feeling, or feature (e.g., the Internet is a valuable research tool).

**Tone** - The writer's attitude toward the subject. Reports often have a serious, authoritative tone.

**Topic** - The subject covered in a piece of writing.

**Transitions** - Words or phrases that help tie ideas together, e.g., However, On the other hand, Since, First, etc.

## K-4 Progression: Reports: Writing to Inform

Standard 1.8 In written reports, students organize and convey information and ideas accurately and effectively.

Criteria	K	1	2	3	4
<b>PURPOSE</b> <b>TOPIC/FOCUS</b> <b>STANCE</b> <b>VOICE/TONE</b> *Evidence of gathered information *Appropriate stance/voice/tone *Controlling idea/focus *Analysis and interpretation	*Writes complete phrases or sentence, but may need minor prompting. *Uses pictures and print, phrases/sentences to convey connected thought. *Some evidence of information gathered.	*Includes a title. *Independently writes clear and complete sentences on a topic.	*Includes a title. *Topic and reason for writing are clear. *Topic may be consistent throughout, but information may be general rather than focused. *Gathered information is clearly related to topic. *May have a focus.	*Includes a title. *Developing voice/tone appropriate to piece. *Piece has a clear topic and focus, but focus may not be fully maintained. *Begins to develop with topic sentences supported by related sentences.	*Includes a title. *Piece has a clear topic and focus but focus is not fully maintained. *voice/tone is appropriate but not maintained. *Piece has a variety of sentence beginnings. *Uses a variety of sentence types.
<b>ORGANIZATION</b> *Overall coherence *Sequential patterns *Appropriate patterns		*Includes 3 or more facts on topic. *Order of sentences makes piece easy to follow.	*Piece is longer and includes a beginning, middle, and end.	*Uses some transitions. *Piece has logical progression of ideas.	*Clear opening, body, and conclusions. *Uses transitions. *Piece has logical progression of ideas.
<b>DETAILS</b> *Naming *Describing *Explaining *Comparing	*Includes details in writing or picture. *May use descriptive language.	*Details in text, with some naming and/or describing. *May include picture that supports text.	*Begins to consider what audience needs to understand. *Begins to address who, what, when where, why, and how. *Details create an image.	*Details support and enhance piece. *Details provide what audience needs for understanding. *Some ideas developed in depth, but some material may be irrelevant.	*Details develop ideas. *Selects details relevant to topic and audience. *Uses a variety of elaboration strategies (naming, describing, explaining, comparing).

## Exemplars of Reports

On the next pages you will find exemplars of reports for grades 1-4. An **exemplar** is a piece of work that demonstrates a certain group's common agreement about what constitutes quality. Each exemplar has been typed for uniformity, and each is accompanied by commentary that relates to the new standards rubric and the developmental progression for Reports: Writing to Inform presented earlier in this document.

<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Kindergarten	No exemplar located	
First Grade	UFO's	40
Second Grade	<i>Caracal</i>	41
	<i>Lava</i>	42
Third Grade	<i>The Lobster</i>	43
Fourth Grade	<i>My Dad</i>	44

U.f.O's

U.f.o's can do lots of interesting stuff.  
They can go to worp sped in a sakind[seond].  
They can care [carry} lots of meshinere  
[machinery]. They can care [carry] lots of  
aliens. I hope I see a u.f.o. sumday.

Focus established.  
Information/elaboration  
supports focus.

Reflects on focus.

In this personal  
information report,  
the writer uses a  
focus of "U.F.O.'s  
can do interesting  
stuff." He/she  
supports that focus  
with three pieces of  
specific information,  
which can be in any  
order. As a  
conclusion, the  
writer reflects on the  
information,  
although this  
reflective conclusion  
is not necessary to  
meet the standard.



### Caracal

Did you know that there is a kind of animal named caracal? It is a kind of cat it looks like it has two ears but it doesn't. It has brown fur and four legs. They are very short and they have short legs. The caracal eats monkeys and deer and buffalo and also gorillas. The caracal's biggest enemy is a hunter and other big cats. The caracal likes to live alone. They come out only at night. The caracal lives in the grasslands.

I think that the caracal is a pretty animal. I like its name, it's neat to say. I learned a lot about the caracal.

Lead is engaging reader.  
Uses complete sentences.  
Uses some sentence variety.

Gives reason for writing.  
One-line ending.  
Details needed to address audience's needs for understanding; most are just describing.

Lava

Lava can be very dangerous.

Magma becomes lava. When magma flows out of a volcano it is called lava flows. It can bury whole cities. Lava can flow up to a thousand square miles. Lava is very hot! It is 12 times hotter than boiling water. The most dangerous kind of lava is basalt lava. It is dangerous because it is so fast. Lava can be dangerous to people and destroy homes.

Focus established.

Information/elaboration supports focus.

Conclusion restates focus. In this researched report, the writer consistently supports the focus of "lava is dangerous." In addition, the elaboration is developed and specific, with several sentences devoted to how hot lava is and several to basalt lava. The conclusion restates the focus.

### The Lobster

The lobster can be eight to sixty inches long. It takes at least five years to be full grown. Its colors are blue and green and black. It is only red when it is cooked.

Context established through list of interesting background facts on lobster.

The most interesting thing about the lobster is how it protects itself.

Focus established.

One way the lobster protects itself is with its claws. It can kill almost any kind of little fish. AT the end of its claws it is very sharp. Sometimes they look very vicious when they aren't. Some big fish know they aren't vicious and eat them.

Information/elaboration on "protecting with claws."

Another way the lobster protects itself is with its eyes. It can see on the sides very well and almost in the back but not all the way. It looks like their eyes are on the bottom of their stalks. Its eyes can turn sideways to see animals all around.

Information/elaboration on "protecting with eyes."

You can see that he lobster is an interesting creature. It can see well and its claws are very useful. The lobster is very good at protecting itself.

Conclusion restates focus.

**My Dad**

**One person I really admire is my Dad. He is always helpful and always there when I need him. My Dad is fun, encouraging, and helpful.**

Context established.

**First of all my Dad is fun. He can make a dull day really exciting. He plays a lot of jokes and games with me. He can also make chores fun by giving the first person done a dime. It seems like he can always think of something fun to do.**

Focus/controlling idea established.

**Also my Dad is encouraging. For example, he is really proud of me when I get a good report card. He also wants me to be really good at sports. Whenever I'm stuck he's always there to cheer me on. Whenever he cheers for me something inside just makes me do my best.**

Information/elaboration on "Dad is fun."

**I don't think I've ever done something good that he hasn't praised.**

**Most importantly my Dad is helpful. He's always there to coach me through the bad times. Like when I get a really tough homework assignment he's always there to give me advice. Same with sports, or how much money I should spend at one time. My Dad is always there to help me, right when I need him.**

Information/elaboration on "Dad is encouraging."

**In conclusion it seems like my Dad will do anything to help me or other people. He helps me do my best but he makes it fun too. My Dad is one person I really admire. And of course, he is my Dad!**

Information/elaboration on "Dad is helpful."

Conclusion restates focus.

## **Procedure: Writing to Direct or Instruct**

### **Standard 1.10**

*In written procedures, students relate a series of steps that a reader can follow. This is evident when students (Pre-K-4):*

- a. Organize the steps of a procedure clearly and logically so the reader can follow them;*
- b. Use words, phrases, and sentences to establish clear transitions between steps.*

#### **What Is a “Procedure”?**

A procedure is a set of steps that is clearly organized and clearly laid out on the page so that a reader can easily and successfully follow the instructions. A procedure always instructs a reader how to make or do something (e.g., play croquet, make a pair of mittens), not in how to be something (a good poet, a good friend).

Because a good procedure piece makes it easy for the reader to follow instructions, certain elements that make the process easier are essential. It will have:

- A clear transition between steps.
- A visual format that makes the steps easy to follow (white space, bold-face, italics, change in type size, diagram, etc.).
- A context to let the reader know when the procedure might be appropriate, as well as hints to the reader about what to watch out for, how to know if the steps are being done correctly, etc., and a conclusion that encourages the reader to get started.

#### **Sample Assignments**

Below are some suggested types of assignments for writing procedures. They are not grade-level-specific, and they are meant to be used as guides and adapted as needed.

##### *Non-content procedures*

#### **Sample One:**

Write a clear procedure showing how to do the following:

- How to use the writing process.
- How to study spelling words.
- How to set the table.
- How to leave a message on a sticky note.

##### *Content area procedures*

#### **Sample Two: Math**

- How to do long division.
- How to add fractions.
- How to solve a problem.
- How to add money.

### **Sample Three: Science**

- How to plant a seed.
- How to measure rain-water.
- How to use a hand lens.

### **Sample Four: Art**

- How to water-color.
- How to make a mobile.

**VERMONT NEW STANDARDS RUBRIC FOR PROCEDURES: WRITING TO DIRECT OR INSTRUCT**

Standard 1.10 In written procedures, students relate a series of steps that a reader can follow.

*This rubric is adapted from materials created by the New Standards Project.*

Criteria	Score Point 5 Exceeds the Standards	Score Point 4 Accomplished Writing	Score Point 3 Intermediate Writing	Score Point 2 Basic Writing	Score Point 1 Limited Writing	Score Point 0 Unscorable  There is no evidence of an attempt to write a procedure piece.
<p><b>CONTEXT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present context (purpose/detail)</li> <li>Anticipate reader needs (purpose/detail)</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>ORGANIZATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delineates steps in procedure</li> <li>Provides transitions between steps</li> <li>Concludes</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>PRESENTATION STRATEGIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>White space, headers</li> <li>Graphics</li> <li>Paragraphing, blocking</li> <li>Stance (voice/tone)</li> <li>Imagery, examples, analogies (details)</li> </ul>	<p>Meets all the criteria listed in score point 4. In addition, a paper receiving this score presents the steps in an unusually effective way.</p> <p>Imaginative strategies (e.g., placement of text, use of charts, pictures, or analogies) enable reader understanding. Not only clear and logical but attractive and inviting. By depicting rather than just telling, this paper appeals to different styles of processing information – visual, verbal, metaphoric – and enables readers to execute the procedure successfully.</p>	<p><b>Sets context; presents enough information so that reader knows when the procedure is appropriate (purpose/detail).</b></p> <p><b>Anticipate reader’s needs; e.g., provides description and list of materials to be used, or indicates conditions for use (detail).</b></p> <p><b>Organizes the steps of procedure clearly and logically.</b></p> <p><b>Provides clear transitions between steps.</b></p> <p><b>Conclusion advances reader’s understanding or appreciation of the process (organization).</b></p> <p><b>Format makes the steps easily accessible, using such strategies as paragraphing, blocking, white space, graphics.</b></p> <p><b>Tone is appropriate for the anticipated user.</b></p> <p><b>Apt examples, imagery, and/or analogies help the reader visualize and understand the process (detail).</b></p>	<p>Contextual information is thin (purpose/detail).</p> <p>Provides materials that user will need but may not adequately indicate necessary conditions for use (detail).</p> <p>Organizes the steps of procedure clearly and logically.</p> <p>Uses some appropriate transitions.</p> <p>Conclusion may be weak (organization).</p> <p>Format makes the steps easy to follow.</p> <p>Tone is appropriate for the anticipated user.</p> <p>Some examples, imagery, and/or analogies help the reader visualize and understand the process (detail).</p>	<p>Context may be missing (purpose/detail).</p> <p>Provides materials that user will need but does not include statements about necessary conditions for use (detail).</p> <p>Steps for carrying out the procedure may not be clear.</p> <p>Transitions may be missing.</p> <p>Minimal closure (organization).</p> <p>Format makes the steps somewhat difficult for the reader to follow.</p> <p>Seems to have no particular user in mind (voice/tone).</p> <p>Few or no images and/or analogies to help the reader visualize and understand the process (detail).</p>	<p>Presents no context.</p> <p>May give list of materials.</p> <p>Steps for carrying out the procedure are incomplete or unclear.</p> <p>Transitions are missing or used inappropriately.</p> <p>Simply stops; no closure (organization).</p> <p>Little evidence of accommodating reader needs; e.g., no use of white space, headers, graphics, etc.</p>	

**Note:** If procedure is not appropriately complex (Vt. standard 2.3), its score is lowered one score point below the rubric language it most closely matches. Following and giving directions are important life skills. Washing clothes, making a bed, and rebuilding an engine are all skills that require practice. A procedure piece should be on a process that a reader can replicate (How-to Wash Clothes, How-to Make a Bed, etc.); it should not explain how to achieve a state of being (How to Love Your Bunny, How to Dump Your Boyfriend, How to Be a Friend to Your Parent).

## Glossary for Procedures

**Context** - The set of facts or circumstances surrounding an event or a situation in a piece of writing. The context is a sentence or two that explains the “why” or necessity of learning this procedure. It may explain the value of the skill.

**Detail** - Words used to explain the process and in some way support the central idea. Details in a procedure piece should include materials needed and the condition or use of these materials, along with definitions of words or jargon that may not be familiar to the audience. Imagery and analogies often enhance a reader’s understanding.

**Format** - The arrangement and general makeup of the piece. This may include such presentation strategies as paragraphs, blocking, additional white spaces, numbering, etc.

**Purpose** - The specific reason for writing; the goal of the writing. In this case, the reason would be to explain how to do something.

**Tone** - The overall feeling or effect created by a writer’s attitude and use of words. This feeling may be serious, mock-serious, humorous, sarcastic, solemn, objective, etc.



## K-4 Progression: Procedures: Writing to Direct or Instruct

Standard 1.10 In written procedures, students relate a series of steps the reader can follow.

Criteria	<u>K</u>	1	2	3	4
<p><b>CONTEXT</b>                      *Presents context (purpose and detail)                      *Anticipates the reader's needs</p> <p><b>ORGANIZATION</b>                      *Delineates steps in procedure                      *Provides transition between steps                      *Provides conclusion</p> <p><b>PRESENTATION STRATEGIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White space, headers</li> <li>• Graphics</li> <li>• Paragraphing, blocking</li> <li>• Stance (voice/ tone)</li> <li>• Imagery examples, analogies (details)</li> </ul>	<p>*With minor prompting may list some details.                      *Presents no context.</p> <p>*Little evidence of sequential order of steps/sentences to carry out procedure.                      *No use of transitions.                      *Abrupt ending.</p> <p>*Pictures/ graphics contain some details.</p>	<p>*Includes a title.                      *Context may be missing.                      *May give a list of materials.</p> <p>*Sequential ordering of 3+ sentences outlining a procedure.                      *May have major gaps in coherence.                      *Transitions are missing or used incorrectly.                      *Simply stops; no closure.</p> <p>*Little evidence of accommodating reader's needs.                      *Generic vocabulary and repetitive sentence structure creates a monotone for reader.                      *Pictures/graphics carry details, though they are not clearly related to text.</p>	<p>*Includes a title.                      *Context may be thin or missing.                      *Provides materials needed, but does not specify conditions for use.                      *Sequential order of 3+ sentences, but steps for carrying out process may not be clear (gaps and leaps).</p> <p>*Major interruptions in thought process make procedure somewhat hard to follow.                      *Transitions may be missing - uses numbers for steps 1,2,3.                      *Simply stops, no closure.                      *Format makes steps somewhat difficult to follow.</p> <p>*Tone may seem to have no specified user in mind.                      *Short, simple sentences.                      *May have some inappropriate word choice.                      *Text provides few or no images to help reader understand/ visualize process.                      *Pictures/ graphics attempt to carry details.</p>	<p>*Includes a title.                      *Contextual information thin.                      *Provides materials needed but doesn't adequately indicate conditions for use.</p> <p>*Steps for carrying out procedure are in sequential order, though may include gaps and leaps in information.                      *Uses some appropriate transitions, but may rely on ordinal math language (first, second, third).                      *Minimal closure.</p> <p>*Format makes steps easy to follow.                      *Attempts appropriate tone for anticipated user.                      *Text attempts some examples and imagery to help reader understand and visualize process.                      *Graphics carry details to support text.</p>	<p>*Includes a title.                      *Sets context: presents enough information so the reader knows when the procedure is appropriate.                      *Anticipates reader's needs; provides description and list of materials to be used or tells condition for use.</p> <p>*Organizes the steps of procedure clearly and logically. There may be minor interruptions in thought, but steps are easy to follow.                      *Provides clear transitions between steps.                      *Conclusion may be weak.</p> <p>*Format uses presentation strategies that make steps easy to follow.                      *Tone is appropriate for anticipated user.                      *Text carries some examples, imagery, and/or analogies that reader can understand/visualize.                      *Graphics carry detail to support text.</p>

## Exemplars of Procedures

On the next pages you will find exemplars of procedures for grades K-4. An exemplar is a piece of work that demonstrates a certain group's common agreement about what constitutes quality. Each exemplar has been typed for uniformity, and each is accompanied by commentary that relates to the new standards rubric and the developmental progression for Procedures presented earlier in this document.

<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Kindergarten	No exemplar located	
First Grade	<i>How to Wrap a Present</i>	51
Second Grade	<i>How to Feed Chickens</i>	52
Third Grade	<i>How to Hang a Coat</i>	53
Fourth Grade	<i>Making Popsicles</i>	54

## How to Wrap a Present

First you go get your gifts. And wrapping paper. Then get your scissors. Third you find a palce that you can work. Next get your scissors, measure the wrapping paper and cut it. Fith fold all four sides and tape them. Last but not least you put the name tag on. Ps If you want you could put a ribbon on.

Sequential ordering of 3+ sentences outlining a procedure.

Includes title, albeit misplaced.

### How To Feed Chickens

Did you ever feed chickens? If you don't know how and you want to know how read this procedar.

Includes title.

You will need a hard plastic cup witch is 4 inches tall and about 3 inches wide, and a bag of chicken corn.

Provides materials needed.

1. First tak your cup, and scoop it in to the chicken corn bag, and fill the cup up hapf full with chicken corn.

Uses numbers for steps – 1,2 3.

2. Then open the gate to the chicken fence with out letting out any of the chickens out of the chicken fence.

Simple, short sentences.

3. After that take half a hand full of chicken corn out of your cup and thro it in the checkien fence without throing any chicken corn on the chicken.

4. Keep throing the chicken corn in to the chicken fence until your cup is empty.

5. Then cose the door to the chicken fence and lock the door to the chicken fence, and put your cup in the corn bag.

Now you know how to feed chickens, and as you see it can be very fun.

Includes closure.

## Third Grade Procedure

### How to Hang a Coat

Someday you may need to hang up your coat when you get inside. Someday you may get hot in your coat and you will have to hang it up in your closet. That is why you should learn to hang up your coat.

You are ready to begin.

Materials you will need:

1 hanger  
A coat  
a closet

Here is how you hang your coat up.

1. you pick up your coat
2. you hold your coat by the collar
3. you pick up your hanger in the other hand
4. Put one side of the hanger in one sleeve and the other side of the hanger in the other sleeve.
5. Then zip or button your coat
6. you put the top of your hanger on the rack.

You hung your coat up perfectly. Now you can do what you want to. Go eat, Go play, Watch TV, do your homework.

Includes title.

Introduction explains what the procedure is and why you might want to do it.

Materials are listed.

Sequence is easy to follow and complete.

Closure is provided.

### Making Popsicles

Have you ever been thirsty but wanted something besides a regular glass of water or lemonade? Boy, do I have a solution for you!

Sets context.

Then I'll show you how to make popsicles! And I'll do it in a few quick, easy-to-follow steps so that you have fun while making your fruity, juicy, popsicles on a scorching 90 degree day!

Okay. It's time to make your popsicles!

Step 1. First you will need some fruit juice, a plastic molding container with the shapes of popsicles in it (You might be able to buy one of these at the supermarket), some recycled popsicle sticks, a pair of hands, and a freezer.

Organizes steps clearly and logically.

Step 2. Pour some fruit juice into each of the popsicle molds in the container.

Step 3. Put one popsicle stick in each of the molds that has fruit juice in it.

Tone is appropriate for the anticipated user.

Step 4. Put the popsicle mold upright in the freezer for about two hours.

Step 5. When the popsicles are frozen, take one of them out of the freezer and suck away!

## Personal Essay: Writing to Explore and Analyze Standard 1.12

*In personal essays, students make connections between experience and ideas. This is evident when students (Pre-K – 4):*

*a. Reflect on personal experience, or the experience of an imagined character, using patterns of cause/effect, comparison, and classification.*

### What is a “personal essay”?

A personal essay is rooted in the writer’s own experience. This experience is the “occasion for reflection.” The personal essay is a broadly inclusive type of writing, and the occasion for reflection may vary a good deal. It might be a specific experience the writer had or imagined (much as a personal narrative is). The occasion might be a book the writer has read, or a news item he has heard, or a tough question she is pondering.

In any case, the personal essay is written not just to report on or recall that occasion, but to *use* the occasion as a springboard for reflection on a level other than that of the experience itself. In a personal essay, the writing does not stop with the experience or occasion – it connects that experience to some bigger realization or understanding.

A personal essay, unlike many other types of writing, does *not* begin with a thesis or a controlling idea to be proved or elaborated; rather, the controlling idea or main point *emerges* from the experience/occasion in the process of reflection. Often the *process* of writing the first draft will help the writer discover where he is going and what he really thinks.

### Sample Assignments

#### *Non-content essay prompts*

**Sample One:** Think of an experience you had that affected you deeply in some way. Describe the experience, writing about those parts that you are going to reflect on.

Then explore how that experience affected you. Did you learn something about life from it? Did you learn something about yourself that you had never been aware of before? (Controlling Idea)

Show us what you learned about yourself. Where you can, refer to the experience so that the reader can see how your new discovery or reflection came from the experience you had. (Elaboration)

**Sample Two:** Think about someone you love very much. This can be a person or a pet. Describe why you love them. What bigger idea does this make you think about?

**Sample Three:** Think of a person you consider a hero. Describe that person carefully. Then reflect on three or four qualities or attributes that seem to define what “being a hero” is all about. What new discovery or reflection about yourself came about as a result of going through this process?

**Sample Four:** Think about something you own that you think is beautiful. Describe its beauty, and then write why the thing is important to you. What bigger idea does this make you think about, such as why beauty is important in our lives?

*Content area*

**Sample Five: Social Studies**

As part of a unit on community service, think about what giving to someone else means.

- Do **not** ask students to reflect on giving.
- Do ask them something like this.

Think about a time in your life when you gave to someone else because you wanted to. You did not expect anything in return. Describe what you did and what you learned about your act of kindness.

**Note:** Relatively few teachers in grades K-4 have been teaching and assessing the personal essay, and as a result, we have included just three exemplars in this guide. We thank Jen Harper of the Cavendish School for her work in teaching and assessing personal essays with her students and we thank Jane Miller of the Burlington Public Schools for finding and providing the second grade exemplars. It is our hope that the definitions, sample assignments, and state rubric in this section will support teachers of grades K-4 in assigning personal essays, using the rubric to give feedback about them to students, and working with colleagues to identify exemplars and benchmarks.



**VERMONT NEW STANDARDS RUBRIC FOR PERSONAL ESSAYS: WRITING TO EXPLORE AND ANALYSE**

Standard 1.12 In personal essays, students make connections between experience and ideas.

*This rubric is adapted from materials created by the New Standards Project.*

Criteria	Score Point 5 Exceeds the Standards	Score Point 4 Accomplished Writing	Score Point 3 Intermediate Writing	Score Point 2 Basic Writing	Score Point 1 Limited Writing
<p><b>OCCASION FOR REFLECTION</b></p> <p><b>Something</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seen</li> <li>• Read</li> <li>• Overheard</li> <li>• Experienced</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>REFLECTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring</li> <li>• Analyzing</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>ELABORATION STRATEGIES, DETAILS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using specific, concrete details</li> <li>• Comparing, contrasting</li> <li>• Naming, describing</li> <li>• Reporting conversation</li> <li>• Reviewing the history</li> <li>• Explaining possibilities</li> <li>• Creating a scenario</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>COHERENCE AND STYLE</b></p>	<p>Score point 5 meets all the criteria listed in score point 4 and offers even more.</p> <p>This paper memorably presents the occasion for reflection and often deals with fine detail as the writer sets up a reflection that is exceptionally thoughtful and convincing.</p> <p>The paper presents ideas in an original fashion, using imaginative yet precise language in its attention to subtleties of thought. This paper often shows a metaphorical use of language.</p> <p>In some notable papers, the writer’s presentation of the occasion is at the same time a reflection; here the reflection is implicit, embedded in a way that leads the reader from the specifics of the piece to the abstraction that underlies it.</p> <p>These papers reveal a deepening insight, sometimes expressed as wonder, and may end with a conclusion but without a sense of conclusiveness.</p>	<p><b>Presents occasion through the effective use of concrete details; sensory language; narrative accounts, that use pacing, dialogue, action; and/or quotations (purpose).</b></p> <p><b>May recount single stimulus or a web of related experiences or observations (organization/detail).</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Is thoughtful, convincing, insightful, exploratory. Reflection is firmly grounded in the occasion (context).</b></p> <p><b>Expresses integral connection between experience and ideas (purpose).</b></p> <p><b>Analyzes ideas by looking at them from multiple angles and/or moving through successively deeper layers of meaning (detail).</b></p> <p><b>Explores an abstraction in both personal and general reflection (detail).</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Uses a variety of strategies both in the occasion and throughout the reflection (detail).</b></p> <p><b>Is attentive to the particulars of observation, recounting them effectively as a way of grounding the reflection.</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Achieves coherence through natural progression of ideas, not through application of external organizational patterns (organization).</b></p> <p><b>Uses precise and appropriate language (voice/tone).</b></p>	<p>May be brief or the occasion may dominate (purpose).</p> <p>May take the form of a preconceived generalization to be explained rather than explored.</p> <p>May be thoughtful but predictable, grounded in occasion rather than reflection (context).</p> <p>Establishes connection between experience and ideas (purpose).</p> <p>Generally takes the form of reasons or supporting statements for a preconceived generalization; may be convincing, but not exploratory (detail).</p> <p>Shows purposeful use of strategies for elaboration (detail).</p> <p>Uses some detail and sensory language (detail).</p> <p>Coherent, often relying on external organizational patterns rather than lines of thought.</p> <p>Uses predictable patterns, word choices, details.</p>	<p>May take the form of autobiographical illustrations or a single incident (purpose).</p> <p>Reflection may be a simple statement of belief or may be implicitly embedded in the title or topic sentence (context).</p> <p>May be limited to superficial generalizations.</p> <p>Shows little purposeful use of strategies for elaboration (detail).</p> <p>May be limited to lists of details or of generalizations.</p> <p>May have lapses in coherence.</p> <p>Stays generally on the topic but may have some internal digressions.</p> <p>Uses simple, generic language.</p>	<p>Occasion for reflection may be omitted or presented only in the title (purpose).</p> <p>May have little or no evidence of reflection (context).</p> <p>May be in the form of a simple, obvious statement.</p> <p>No attempt to elaborate or may attempt to elaborate by repetition of initial statement.</p> <p>Lapses in coherence, lack of organization.</p> <p>Simple, generic language with no sentence variety.</p>

Score Point 0 Unscorable There is no evidence of an attempt to write a procedure piece.

## **Glossary for Personal Essays**

**Coherence** - The quality achieved when all the ideas are clearly arranged and connected.

**Elaboration** - The words used to describe, persuade, explain, or in some way support the main idea; to be effective, details should be vivid, colorful, and appeal to the senses. Details can be descriptive, sensory, and/or reflective.

**Grounded in the Occasion** - The context of the piece is made clear and obvious throughout the piece.

**Occasion** - Context; the set of facts or circumstances that lead to reflection in a personal essay.

### **My Little Bearsie**

My bear is important to me. She looks like a little baby. I keep it on my bed. My foster mom gave it to me. It is brown and pink. It is little. It feels fluffy. It has a tag that says, "give me a hug," so I give it lots of hugs.

It reminds me of my little pet cat Lucky because she ran away and never came back. I felt sad. It reminds me of my dog that died. I loved them soooooooooo much. It reminds me of my two pets because a bear is an animal and so is mine.

I wonder if my cat will ever come back. I wonder will she ever come back. It makes me sad. Will I ever see her again? I love her so so much. How is she doing? How did she die? I miss her.

### **My Golden Birds**

My golden birds are important to me. I got them in Vietnam. My cousin bought them for me. They are special to me because they remind me of Vietnam. They are in a little black box. When you open the little black box, the birds wiggle and the box has a chirping sound.

It reminds me of my family because I got it there in Vietnam. I feel sad because I have to come back to Vermont. I feel happy because I got to see some relatives of my family. I remember in Vietnam I would put it on top of the refrigerator. Sometimes I would take it down and listen to the birds chirp.

I wonder if I can go back to Vietnam again. I wonder if I would see new relatives. I wonder if they can come here and live in Vermont.

## Seeing My Cousin

## Fourth Grade Exemplar

I watched a movie called A Long, Long Journey. The main character was a 12 year old boy named Yanic from Poland. We saw the movie in Immigration. It was about a family that has not seen their father in 3 years.

Reflection is firmly grounded in the occasion.

When I saw the father meet his family it reminded me when I saw my cousin that lived in Moussieur. I was so animated when I saw her that all we did was played and played. I was so excited because I didn't see her for a year or so.

Presents occasion through the effective use of concrete details; sensory language.

I was so excited to see my cousin because we share the same interest and we are the same age. We are both in the fourth grade we know the same amounts of stuff too.

Establishes connection between experience and ideas (purpose).

When I saw my cousin Kayla it felt like french fries and ketchup meeting. It felt so good to see the person but horrible to leave. Like a year or two ago we had lunch but had to say good bye. I was very sad and started to cry. When we got back I got to see my cousins again. We got to play no matter what where I was I had a lot of fun. Now I am going to Disney and I get to see her again!

It feels like you were on the Boomerang where you go up and down upside down and backwards. When you go up a hill you feel happy and when you go down the hill you feel sad. When you go up a hill you get to see a person. When you go down a hill you have to leave.

What I learned is that life is not a straight line. There are a lot of ups and downs in life. I have been over a few ups and downs in my life.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Tools to Use in Teaching Writing**

The tools on the next pages are just a small sample of materials available to help teachers of grades K-4 engage students in learning to write in the various genres.

Some of these tools support retelling of stories and narratives. It is important to remember that retelling is but one skill needed in response to literature and that a response to literature is much more than the retelling of the story.

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**Standard 1.9 Narratives**  
**Writing to Tell a Story in the Primary Grades**  
**Instructional Sequence to Introduce Narrative Writing**  
by Eloise Ginty, Newton School

This sequence of instruction takes young writers through three different narratives – the first one whole-group written, the next one small-group written, and the third one individually written.

A problem that children sometimes have in narrative writing is *focus*. Sometimes, with no guidance, they will produce a piece of writing that describes a string of events but has no particular point.

These sequences are premised on the idea that, in narrative writing, the focus is the *problem*, and that this problem is driven by the *character* and his *motivation*. It relies strongly on using a familiar story (in this case, *Strega Nona* by Tomie dePaola) and building new narratives from that frame of reference.

**1<sup>st</sup> Grade**  
**Introduction to Narratives**  
**Lesson #1**

“Let’s think about what makes a story good. I’m going to read you two stories that I wrote and you tell me which story is better.”

Story #1

A couple of years ago my mom and I went out for a boat ride. It was a nice day and we were really happy. We decided to turn off the motor and just float for awhile while we ate our lunch. All of a sudden we began to move, first slowly and then faster and faster. We were both pretty scared and ran to the edge to see what we could see. A big sea serpent was pushing our boat. It had a long spiky tail and it was making a growling sound. My mom and I didn’t know what to do so we just watched as it pushed us along faster and faster. At last, we slowed down. The sea serpent swam out in front of our boat and splashed its big tail toward a fallen-down tree in the water. Under the tree was a baby sea serpent who was stuck and crying. I whispered to my mother that I thought the big sea serpent was asking us to help free its baby from under the branch. My mother said that it would be too dangerous but I wanted to give it a try anyway. I took the boat over to the tree and tied a rope on and carefully pulled it off the baby. The baby quickly swam over to its mother, who looked up at us with a big sea serpent grin. Of course, no one believed our story when we got home, but that’s okay.

Story #2

Yesterday I got up in the morning, brushed my teeth, went to school, went home, then ate a big dinner. After dinner I read my book, brushed my teeth, and went to bed.

“Which story was better? Why?” Encourage (steer) the discussion to touch on: problem, solution, detail, setting, characters. Frame students’ ideas into: interesting details, boring if there’s no problem, happy solution, being able to identify or picture yourself with characters. They also might have ideas to make it even better; this immediately shows what good ideas they already have as authors.



**1<sup>st</sup> Grade**  
**Introduction to Narratives**  
**Lesson # 2**

“Let’s be reminded what makes a narrative story good.”

Let the students remind each other. Rephrase their thoughts to emphasize these components:

Interesting Characters  
Problem  
Solution  
Good Details  
Settings

“I’m going to read *Strega Nona* by Tomie dePaola (a big book of this story idea) to you. While I’m reading, your job is to think about whether this is a good narrative story or not.”

Read the story through. Do not allow or encourage any interruptions.

Discuss it. “Is this a good narrative?” “Why?”

Make sure these questions are answered within the discussion.

“Who are the characters? Are they interesting? Can you understand why they did some of the things that they did?”

“What is the problem(s)?”

“How is it solved?”

“What are some details that make it interesting?”

**1<sup>st</sup> Grade**  
**Introduction to Narratives**  
**Lesson #3**

“Remember the *Strega Nona* story I read to you yesterday? Remind me what happened in that story.

Let’s begin to plan to write our own narrative together.”

Put the narrative planning worksheet up on the overhead.

Be sure the students understand that characters don’t have to be people.

Ask for examples of characters from stories to show the variety.

Explain that in our narrative we’re going to have something that is magic. It doesn’t have to be a pasta pot. Brainstorm examples of magic things in other stories.

Explain to students that their idea might or might not get used, but that all the ideas are good and they will eventually have a chance to write their very own.

Now, read through the planning sheet and have the children brainstorm ideas to fill in the blanks.

Read over the elements when finished and explain that we’ll use this to write a cooperative narrative tomorrow.

## Narrative Worksheet

---

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name**

Character \_\_\_\_\_

Character Name \_\_\_\_\_

Character Want/Wish \_\_\_\_\_

Setting \_\_\_\_\_

Magic Thing \_\_\_\_\_

Problem \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Solution \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**1<sup>st</sup> Grade**  
**Introduction to Narratives**  
**Lesson #4**

Put the narrative worksheet back up on the overhead and have students remind each other what the different elements are.

Now put the pre-written framework for the narrative up on the screen. Skip the title for now and read the beginning, pointing to the words as you go. When you get to the first blank, have the students give you the character's name from the planning sheet. Continue in this way, filling in the narrative framework using the information from the planning sheet.

Go back and read the narrative to the children.

“Does our story have all the components? Character, magic thing, problem, solution? Are there some interesting details?”

“Does it have a beginning, middle and end?”

“What would be a good title for our narrative?”

“You have all just helped write a narrative!”

Make a big book and use the students' illustrations.

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**by**

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Once upon a time, there was a very curious \_\_\_\_\_,  
whose name was \_\_\_\_\_. One day, \_\_\_\_\_  
was peeking around \_\_\_\_\_ watching Grandma, who was using  
her magic. (S)He saw her \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ became so curious that (s)he couldn't resist trying  
out the magic. (S)He had always wanted \_\_\_\_\_  
and this seemed like the perfect chance to get it. So, \_\_\_\_\_

At first, \_\_\_\_\_ was so pleased, but then, the trouble began.

Poor \_\_\_\_\_, (s)he realized that (s)he'd made a big mistake.

The problem was solved when \_\_\_\_\_

So here ends the story of \_\_\_\_\_. Do you think (s)he'll be able  
to resist the magic next time?

**1<sup>st</sup> Grade**  
**Introduction to Narratives**  
**Lesson #5**

“Remember the story we wrote together yesterday? I’m going to read it to you now so that you can hear how it sounds again. Let’s retell that story together. Start at the beginning and tell me what happened in that story.” Let students take turns and cooperatively do a retell.

Half of the students should make a variety of illustrations for the book. The teacher will probably need to assign different parts to different students in order to end up with at least an illustration for each page of the book.

Split the other half into two groups, one working with the para, one with the teacher. Use the planning sheet and the framework to write small-group narratives the way you did as a large group. The small groups give each child more of a voice, but students still have to compromise with each other about group decisions.

This process may take a few days for each group to complete.

Make books that are student illustrated and let the groups share the narratives with the whole group.

**1<sup>st</sup> Grade**  
**Introduction to Narratives**  
**Lesson #6**

Students are now ready to work on their own individual narratives. This is very exciting as they get to make all the author decisions. They've heard a lot of ideas by this point and are thrilled to write their own.

Follow the same format in small groups, letting the students fill in their own planning sheets with best-guess spelling.

Then let them write their story onto the framework, supporting the writing as necessary. For some this means dictating; others may be independent.

Again, this work may take quite a few days and students will go at their own pace within the group. Their work should be made into a book that they can illustrate.

Students practice reading their final copy to a partner. Some may be actually able to read it as they are so familiar with it; others may be retelling their story. Partners are responsible for identifying components.

Students sign up for "Writers Read" when finished and have the opportunity to read their story to the whole group. The group identifies components of their narrative.

# Narrative Planning Sheet

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**Name**

\_\_\_\_\_ Main Character \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Character's Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Setting \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Problem \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Solution \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## **1<sup>st</sup> Grade Narrative Writing**

- Fill out your planning sheet
- Write story adding detail
- Check off areas on planning sheet as they are written
- Add a conclusion or ending
- Draw illustration
- Read story
- Add the title
- Highlight problem and solution
- Circle spelling words with a red pencil
- Make sure your name is on it
- Read to partner, ask partner to retell story, identifying problem and solution
- Sign up to read to the group.

### **Example of Group-Written Narrative**

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by

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Once upon a time, there was a very curious bear whose name was Fluffy Fred. One day, Fluffy Fred was peeking around the corner and he saw one another stuffed animal try on a jacket that had a magic button on it. All of a sudden the stuffed animal came to life. Fluffy Fred became so curious that he couldn't resist trying out the magic himself. So, he waited until the jacket was brought back and he quietly went over and put it on. He could feel the magic bringing him to life and he ran out of the house to explore the world. Then the trouble began. A little boy noticed him and grabbed him up and roughly took him to his house. Fluffy Fred became very sad because he wanted to go back home to his other stuffed animal friends but he didn't know the way.

Poor Fluffy Fred realized that he'd made a big mistake. The problem was resolved when the rough little boy grabbed up Fluffy Fred and off they went. Luckily, the little boy dropped Fluffy Fred right in front of his house and he quickly ran in and took the jacket off and decided that he'd never go near the jacket again.

So here ends the story of Fluffy Freddy. Do you think (s)he'll be able to resist the magic next time?

## Example of Group-Written Narrative

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by

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Once upon a time, there was a very curious girl whose name was Asha Rainbow. One day, Asha Rainbow was peeking around the corner watching one of her friends. She saw her take a sip of a milky magic potion that had a crystal in it. All of a sudden Grandma Witch's lips turned to gold. They were beautiful and shiny. Asha Rainbow became so curious that she couldn't resist trying out the magic herself. So, she waited until no one was looking and she went over and took a sip of the magic potion. Instantly she could feel her lips turn to gold. She went running off to look in the mirror. They were very beautiful. She went running off to tell her friend about it but realized when she got there that she couldn't talk. Then the trouble began. She found her friend crying because she couldn't talk either. Poor Asha Rainbow realized that she had made a big mistake. She sat there and cried. The tears rolled down past her nose and onto her lips.

The problem was resolved when the tears touched her lips the magic spell was broken. Both Asha Rainbow and her friend could talk again.

## Narrative Checklist

	Yes	Maybe	No
Character (s)			
Setting			
Want/desire			
Spicy beginning			
Interesting details			
Describing words			
Event 1			
Event 2			
Event 3			
Satisfying conclusion			
Keeps a focus			
Spaces between words			
Correct spelling			
Punctuation			
Neat handwriting			

# General Story Map

Abstracted from *The Pennsylvania System of State Assessment: Reading Instructional Handbook*. Revised 1997.

## **Use story maps to teach students the elements of the story grammar.**

Most students have a sense of story structure when they first come to school, but many do not. Although this story sense probably will be developed or enhanced through natural exposure to the many stories read in school, it should not be assumed. Teaching students the structural elements enables them to anticipate the type of information they should be looking for as they read, and strengthens their recall of story events.

On a regular basis, after a story has been completed, use the teacher-created map to define and illustrate the story grammar elements. With some primary level children it may be necessary, however, to begin by talking about the types of story events that occur at the beginning, middle, and end of a selection.

## **Use story maps to teach students to create and use their own story maps.**

After students have had several opportunities to see how the major elements of the story grammar can be represented in a map, provide experiences for the students to become active participants in creating and using them. In this way students will become directly aware of how knowledge of text structure will help them understand what they read. Use activities such as the following:

As they read a selection, have students complete a story map. The first box contains a simplified version appropriate for use with younger children, and the second is a more complex alternative for upper-grade students. Use these maps as the focus of the post-reading discussion.

### **Simplified Version of Story Map**

Who is in the story?

Where does the story take place?

When does it happen?

What is it about?

How does it turn out?

### General Story Map

Setting (When/Where):

Characters:

Initiating event:

Problem/Goal:

Major events:

Resolution:

Theme/Main idea:

Have students use a story map format to compose oral and written book reports.

Regularly, after a group has finished a story, call on one student to retell it. A statement such as “Tell me about this story” can be used to elicit the desired open-ended response. In this activity, encourage students to focus on the story elements in their retellings.

#### **Use story maps to create questions that guide the discussion of a story.**

The discussion of a narrative selection will enhance students’ understanding if the order of the questions posed by the teacher follows the organization of the story map. Also, consistently discussing stories in their logical sequence will strengthen students’ sense of the important story grammar elements and thus increase their ability to comprehend stories they will read in the future. The following are sample questions that can be asked about each of the story grammar elements.

#### Setting

When does the story take place?

Where does the story take place?

Could the setting have been different?

Why do you think the author chose this setting?

#### Characters

Who were the characters in the story?

Who was the most important character in the story?

Which character did you enjoy the most? Why?

What is (a particular character) like?

#### Initiating event

What started the chain of events in this story?

What is the connection between this event and the problem?

#### Problem/Goal

What is the main problem/goal?

Why is this a problem/goal for the main character?

What does this problem/goal tell us about this character?

How is the setting related to the problem/goal?

What is there about the other characters that contributes to this problem/goal?

#### Events

What important events happened in the story?

What did \_\_\_\_\_ do about \_\_\_\_\_ ?

What was the result of this?

Why didn't it succeed?

What did \_\_\_\_\_ do next?

How did \_\_\_\_\_ react to this?

What do you learn about \_\_\_\_\_ from the course of action taken?

#### Resolution

How is the problem solved/goal achieved?

How else could the problem have been solved/goal have been achieved?

How would you change the story if you were the author?

#### Theme

What is the theme of this story?

What do you think the author was trying to tell readers in this story?

What did \_\_\_\_\_ learn at the end of this story?

These sample questions are quite general and are suggested only to stimulate teachers' thinking about the story-specific questions they may want to ask. The box below provides a story map outline that teachers can use to plan instruction.

### Story Map for Teacher Planning

Themes/Main ideas:

Setting (When/Where):

Major Characters:

Name

Traits

Function in Story

Initiating event:

Problem/Goal:

Major events:

Resolution:



## Using the Painted Essay to Teach Children to Write Responses to Literature

by Jane Miller, Burlington School District

When students write a Response To Literature, the essay format helps them organize their thinking. Diana Leddy, from Newton School, invented the “painted essay,” which introduces young children to the parts of the essay through color. Each part of the essay has a different color that cues the students as they write. The goal of the painted essay is to help students create a visual image of the essay structure through the use of color. Children are introduced to all the parts of a Response To Literature from the beginning. The principles of the Response To Literature are the same, no matter what the age, grade level, or ability of the students. The content and sophistication of the response, however, changes and develops over time.

### Before You Begin

Before you introduce the painted essay to children, write one yourself. Use a piece of adult literature with an assignment appropriate for your text. (Note: Many of the assignments that are suitable for young children also work for older students and adults.)

- Take notes about your process.
- Notice how it feels to think of the color red as you title your piece.
- Notice what questions you ask yourself.
- Play around with the concept of a painted essay.
- Think of your students. What will help them when you introduce this format?

Next, choose an assignment and a text you will use with your students. Write another essay as your benchmark piece. This means you will write a Response to Literature you think most/all of your students will be able to write. This benchmark piece will be the standard you expect all of your students to attain with teaching, support, and guidance. Think of one student in your class you feel could meet the standard. Write your piece the way that student might write. (Note: The exemplar *No More Nightmares* on page 88 was written for second and third graders.)

Rewrite your benchmark piece on a chart and/or an overhead so the children can use it as a model for their piece and can participate more fully in the lesson. (Note: Copy centers have machines that can make 8 1/2” by 11” paper into a chart.) Create a handout of the benchmark for each student’s literacy folder as a reference.

Save all the notes, drafts, and graphic organizers used to write this benchmark piece so children will see your complete essay process. Your students will use your process when they write their Response to Literature essay. Add your work to the bulletin board for reference.

Teach the “painted essay” in a Response to Literature lesson that is accessible to all your students. The lesson described below uses the text *There’s a Nightmare in my Closet* by

Mercer Mayer. It has been used successfully with children to show how the character changes from the beginning of the text to the end.

### **Step One**

Introduce standard 1.7 to the children. Write the name, number and content of the standard on a sentence strip. Explain the standard. Tell the children they will be writing a Response to Literature. Put up your benchmark piece as an example with the assignment. Read both the exemplar and the assignment aloud to the children. Reference the standard and explain how you are teaching to a standard. Your students will be writing a Response to Literature using the same assignment you used, the same (or different) text, and the same process.

The benchmark piece shows the children what they will have to do, what a Response to Literature looks like and the thinking they will be expected to show you in standard 1.7. The benchmark piece is an excellent teaching tool and reference point for the year. (Note: Young children also benefit from a benchmark piece they create as a class with your help. Too much print can be overwhelming for young children.)

### **Step Two**

*Reread the assignment, point to the benchmark, and tell the children you chose There's a Nightmare in my Closet, by Mercer Meyer, to read and write about. (Note: This is not the time to "work" the assignment.) Read the book aloud. Look at the cover, talk about the title, read a few pages with the children and predict what will happen next. Finish reading and discussing the book. (Note: Remember to use an accessible text when you're teaching this new format to your students. You don't want the text to get in the way of their understanding the painted essay.)*

Reread the assignment as you refer to the text with the children. Show them how to use the assignment with the text and the pictures to support their thinking. Walk them through the process you used naming the parts of the process as you go. Show them where you used the text to support an idea. Show them how you chose the title. Show them how and where your graphic organizers match the corresponding parts of the essay. (Note: Remember, your main focus is to teach the painted essay. Be careful not to confuse the children with too much information at once.)

### **Step Three**

Name and label the parts of the essay as you point to them on the chart. Reread the labels as you paint your chart the appropriate colors with a paint-brush and tempera. Send the children to their desks with crayons, markers, colored pencils, or watercolors and a copy of the same benchmark piece. Use the overhead to paint to guide their painting of the essay.

Start at the top of the essay and work down. Pay attention to naming the parts as you go. Provide catchy references to the colors so the children will remember them when they write. Tell the children the first word of the first sentence and the last word of the last sentence for each color so they can find their place as they paint.

## The Painted Essay

### 1. Title - red

The title of the piece is red, fire-engine red. “The color red gets the reader ready to read.” Make a rectangle around the title and lightly color over the words in red.

### 2. Introductory Paragraph - red

The introductory paragraph is red because you are hooking the reader. You are still “getting the reader ready for the rest of the piece.” Have the children draw a rectangle around the whole first paragraph. Wait to color the inside red until after the controlling idea has been identified and colored. The introductory paragraph of a Response to Literature establishes context for the reader about some aspect of the text and the paragraphs that will follow.

### 3. Controlling Idea - blue and yellow

Embedded in the introductory paragraph is the controlling idea. It is the focus of the piece, the thesis statement. The controlling idea is colored blue and yellow. The controlling idea is usually one sentence. It is often the last sentence of the first paragraph.

The first part of the sentence is blue, the second half yellow. (Note: This is based on a four-paragraph essay. You will use a pattern of blue-yellow-blue-yellow as the number of proof paragraphs increases. Titles can also identify a controlling idea. Feel free to figure out a way to add blue and yellow to the red title if the title identifies the focus of the piece.)

Example: At the beginning the boy is scared, at the end the boy is brave.

Blue

Yellow

### 4. Proof Paragraph #1 - blue

Proof Paragraph #1 supports the first part of the controlling idea with references from the text and can include personal response. The color of this paragraph matches the first color of the controlling idea. (Note: The colors in the controlling idea may be reversed so that you start with yellow. The order is less important than consistency.)

### 5. Proof Paragraph #2 - yellow

Proof Paragraph #2 supports the second part of the controlling idea with citations and/or references from the text and can include personal response. The color of this paragraph matches the second part of the controlling idea.

### 6. Closing Paragraph - green

The last paragraph is a blending of the previous two paragraphs, hence the color is a blend of the previous two colors. Children know that if you mix blue and yellow, you will get green, the color of the last paragraph. Let children infer this last color with clues from you. The last paragraph serves to “tie” the essay together. The last paragraph signals the end of the essay, restates the thesis in a new, surprising way, and offers more personal commentary, a “so what” if appropriate. For young children, include an individualized response in this last paragraph. Draw a green rectangle around the last paragraph and color in the words. Children like to use their blue and yellow crayons or paints to blend colors.

### 7. Transition Words - Purple

The beginnings of paragraphs and sentences inside paragraphs have words that help the reader move from one part of the essay to another. Color the transition words purple and introduce the concept in another lesson. (Note: It helps to have lists of transition words that writers and readers can refer to on a chart in the room. Find transition words in books during reading workshops.)

### 8. Review - all colors

As a way to review, I ask the children to create a border around the outside of the essay or the outside edge of the paper. Start at the top with red for the title and color each section of the border with the exact order of the colors on the essay the children have just painted. Be sure to rename the parts as the children paint their border.

#### Step Four

Reinforce the concept of the painted essay by writing a group essay right away using the same text with the same prompt/assignment.

Keep the introduction the same and write a new controlling idea. The rest of the essay will belong to the class, and a new title can be chosen at the end. As you construct the new essay with the children, color the parts, name the parts, and define the function of each part.

#### Step Five

Students can write small group essays, or, depending on their age, write one themselves as you take them through the steps, one at a time. This is a time to focus on structure, order, and the appropriate color of the parts. Keep the content load to a minimum. Increase it as the children become more proficient with the organizational structure of the essay.

## Painted Essay Extensions

### Painted Essay Puzzle

Cut colored construction paper up into the parts of an essay. Use the same colors used in the “painted essay” so that when it is put together, the colors match the essay you painted as a class. Tape the paper together and/or make it into a chart. Make smaller versions for the writing center. Add vocabulary words to the colored construction paper and ask the students to match the words to the parts of the essay.

Add cut-up parts of one or two written essays. See if the children can match all the parts correctly. This is an excellent game for the children to do as a center activity. (Note: Make sure you have colored and labeled charts for the children to refer to if they are working on these tasks independently.)

The chart and the pieces could look like the ones below:

Title – Red	Title
Introduction – Red	Controlling Idea
Controlling Idea – Blue and Yellow	Proof Paragraph #1
Proof Paragraph #1 – Blue	Proof Paragraph #2
Proof Paragraph #2 – Yellow	Ending
Conclusion – Green	Conclusion
	Summary
	Context
	Transition Words
	Response to Literature
	Citations
	References
	Introduction
	Commentary

## Talking Essay

Instead of, or in addition to, writing an essay with the group, the children create a “talking essay.” The talking essay is an excellent way to introduce the concept of an essay and all of its parts.

Make large colored construction cards the children hold and show as they talk through their part of the essay. Each child is given a part of the essay to compose and perform for the rest of the class. Have the children sit in chairs in the order of their essay. Have them find the appropriate card that names, defines, and identifies their part of the essay. The children hold up their cards as they “talk through their essay.”

The cards the children hold up could look like the ones below:

1. Title (Red)

The title matches the Response to Literature.

2. Introduction/Context (Red)

Start your Response with a summary (short retelling).

Tell the title and author, the problem/conflict/controlling idea and how the problem was solved.

3. Controlling Idea (Blue and Yellow)

The point of the Response to Literature.

This is your purpose for writing, your focus.

4. Proof Paragraph #1 (Blue)

Evidence from the text that supports the controlling idea.

5. Proof Paragraph #2 (Yellow)

Evidence from the text that supports the controlling idea.

6. Ending/Conclusion (Green)

Part 1 – Restate the controlling idea, surprise the reader with a new slant on the idea.

Part 2 – Give an individual response to the text/ideas in the text.

## Build an Essay with Blocks

Diana Leddy suggests using Legos to build/rebuild an essay. The children learn the “building blocks” of an essay with Legos of various lengths and appropriate colors. Each block could represent a sentence in the essay. Using each block to represent a sentence is an excellent way for children to visually see where they need to add more detail or information. Use colored paper to cover any Lego piece not included in the colors of the “painted essay.” (For example, the purple transition words.)

## Sentence Strip Structures

Buy long colored strips. Use these to color-code essays as you write with your students. Diana Leddy recommends always using the appropriate colors of the “painted essay” even if you haven’t formally introduced the concept. Children will get used to the colors and will begin to learn the parts of the Responses to Literature essay for themselves. (Note: there still needs to be explicit teaching of the painted essay for all children.) Diana recommends writing complete Responses to Literature so children always see the “whole.” Write these over time instead of in one sitting.

Write a Response to Literature on the appropriate sentence strips, mix them up, and have the children reconstruct the parts of the essay using the colors and content as clues. Use a pocket chart to hold your essay pieces. The pocket chart is flexible. Move your strips around to accommodate more information, less information, new information, and the order of the parts.

## Colored Exhibit Paper

Buy colored, lined exhibit paper or make your own using colored copy paper. One package of exhibit paper comes in green, blue, yellow and pink and makes a colorful-looking essay. (Note: If you make your own paper, you can vary the size between the lines. Cut the paper into smaller pieces to save paper.) The children write the appropriate part of the essay on the correct color. The children glue their essay parts together when all the parts are completed.

## Painted Essay PLUS

The painted essay PLUS uses the computer to highlight the different parts of the essay. Experiment with different typefaces, type sizes, underlining, bold print and italics. (Note: It’s important to make the highlights are consistent from essay to essay.)

### Standard 1.7

#### Response to Literature

In responses to literature, students show understanding of reading, connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues, and make judgments about the text.

### **Responses to Literature Assignment**

#### Preparing to Write

Some stories are “change stories” because something in them changes. Stories have characters who change. The character can change feelings, attitude, behavior, opinions, or goals.

#### Writing Task

Choose a story that has a character who changes his or her feelings. Pick one of the main characters and show how that person changes. Describe how that person’s feelings are at the beginning and ending of the story. Use examples from the text to support your thinking.

## **Exemplar: No More Nightmares**

*There's a Nightmare in my Closet* by Mercer Meyer is a story about a little boy who is afraid of nightmares. The boy decides to face his fears. He faces his fears and makes friends with his nightmare. This is a change story because the boy changes his feelings about nightmares. He is afraid of nightmares in the beginning and ends up making friends with them.

In the beginning, the story says, "I was even afraid to turn around and look." This is the boy talking about being afraid to look at his closet because there were nightmares inside. There are a lot of pictures on the first eight pages that show the boy's face. He looks scared and frightened. The pictures and the words show the boy is afraid of nightmares.

In the end, after the boy decides to face his fears, there is a picture of the boy with the nightmare. They are in the boy's bed trying to go to sleep. The boy has a smile on his face. The last picture shows both of them asleep. These pictures show the boy is not afraid of nightmares. The boy made friends with his nightmare.

In conclusion, the story is a change story because the main character changes his feelings about nightmares. This would be a good book for young children afraid of nightmares. The book would show them they can face their fears. The book shows you can solve your own problems.



## Graphic Organizer: Story Map

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Beginning**

**Who**

**Where**

**When**

--

**Middle**

**Problem**

--

**Ending**

**Solution**

--

**Standard 1.7 Response to Literature**  
**Writing for Reading Comprehension in the Primary Grades**  
**Instructional Sequence for Response Writing**

By Eloise Ginty, Newton School

This sequence of instruction is designed for students who have already had a group writing experience of a Response to Literature. In this case, the teacher reads aloud to the class several times and does a lot of discussion to make sure students have basic comprehension of the story itself.

It's important to note that students are not doing the reading independently. The teacher has separated the actual reading from the "thinking about text" so that students can concentrate on the thinking and writing.

# **Rooster's Off to See the World**

## **By Eric Carle**

**Read the story to the group.**

Discuss:

Who is the main character?

What is the setting?

What is it that the rooster wanted?

What was the problem he encountered?

How did he solve it?

Was the rooster happy at the end?

How would you describe the rooster's personality?

Discuss some focus statements for a response to this story.

For example:

Rooster doesn't plan very well.

Rooster learns how important it is to plan.

Traveling can be fun, but not if you don't plan the trip well.

Use your idea or one of the above and write it on a strip. Find details in the story that support the focus.

Write these supporting details on strips as you find them.

Brainstorm a conclusion sentence. Write one to a strip.

Arrange the strips in order. Read the response and edit.

## Example

Traveling can be fun but not if you don't plan the trip well.

---

Rooster asked his friends to go on a trip with him.

---

When they got hungry, they didn't like it that there was no food to eat.

---

They didn't like it that there was no shelter.

---

When they got tired, there was no place to rest.

---

Rooster and his friends went home unhappily.

---

If you pack everything you need, going on a trip can be a lot of fun because you can stay a long time and play in the tent with your friends.

---

by Luke, Jessica, Tory & Hannes

---

# **Standard 1.8 Reports**

## **Writing to Inform in the Primary Grades**

### **Instructional Sequences for Report Writing**

By Eloise Ginty, Newton School

Reports cover a great many types of writing. What they all have in common is that the primary purpose of the report is to inform the reader.

To write a report, the writer needs to start with some information. This information can come from a variety of places. Sometimes it comes from the writer's own experience (as in "Here are the ways that my dog is an explorer.") Sometimes, the information comes from class instruction (as in a class unit on seeds). Sometimes, the information comes from individual research (as in looking up facts about koala bears and writing about them).

The following instructional sequences use a variety of sources of information, and have all been used successfully with first graders.

#### Sequence One – "Milk"

This report is designed to be used as an introductory experience for first graders. The information that the students are working with has come from classroom instruction. The students write the report as a group, and the product is a group product. Students do a lot of discussion and oral reading in this process, and their "writing" is limited to pictures. This helps students to put all their energy into the thinking that they are doing, and not into the actual "writing."

#### Sequence Two – "Seeds"

This report is designed to be used as a small group experience in report writing for first graders. The information has all come from classroom instruction (especially from the book Hands-On Nature by Jenepher Lingelbach, VINS, 1986). Here, students are using report writing to construct meaning from their "seed work" in science. Students are working in small groups for discussion, but each student writes her own short report.

Note: an independent report, at this age, is typically shorter than a group-written or dictated one.

#### Sequence Three – "Individual Research Report"

This report is done individually. It builds a lot of parent/adult connection into the sequence. It also builds in a process for writers to use more than one source in gathering information for their report.

**Sequence One – “Milk”**  
**First Grade Report Writing**  
**Lesson 1**

What is a report?

Reports tell us about a certain topic.

Reports can be about anything.

Reports have to have a focus.

The focus of the report is backed up with evidence.

Read some examples of first and second grade reports.

Discuss the focus.

Discuss the evidence.

Brainstorm some other topics that reports could be on.

Include examples of a focus for each topic mentioned.

## **First Grade Report Writing Lesson 2**

### **Group Report About Milk**

Now that we know what a report is, we are going to write one together about milk.

What do we already know about milk? Brainstorm ideas on a big piece of chart paper, separating ideas and terms.

Tell students what the focus of our group report will be:

A lot goes into getting milk on the shelf for us to buy.

Now let's do some research.

Read *What's For Lunch? Milk* by Claire Llewellyn

Afterward add onto chart new facts and new terms learned.

If necessary, reread the book and stop to take notes.

Color-code information as to what pertains to the focus and what doesn't.

# **1<sup>st</sup> Grade Report Writing**

## **Lesson 3**

### **Group Writing of Report**

Cut up facts gathered and sort by color.

Reread those that are pertinent to the focus.

Tape them up where all can see.

On a big piece of chart paper, begin writing the report.

Start by writing the focus statement and taping it on the top of the board.

What are some of the steps in producing milk?

Use fact strips that answer this question and organize them in some kind of order.

Tape them up under the focus.

What else should we include in our report?

Add a conclusion: As you can see, there are a lot of steps in getting milk to the grocery store for us to buy.

Add title.

Read over report to hear how it sounds.



## **First Grade Report Writing Lesson 4**

### **Illustrate Milk Report**

Have copies of report ready for each student.

Read the report chorally.

Students circle spelling words and highlight focus.

Have students partners read.

Students work on individual illustrations to accompany the report.

Glue report and illustration on colored paper to take home.

## MILK

By the First Grade

A lot goes into getting milk on the shelf for us to buy.

Cows eat hay and grain and grass.

Cows can be milked by hand or machine.

Cows need to be milked twice a day.

The cow has four teats.

The farmer cleans off the cow's udder.

The milk goes into the holding tank at the farm.

The holding tank is refrigerated.

The milk tank truck takes the milk from the farm to the dairy.

All the machines at the dairy have to be cleaned and sterilized.

Machines pasteurize and homogenize the milk at the dairy.

Milk is packaged into cartons and jugs.

Milk needs to be refrigerated.

The delivery truck picks up the milk at the dairy and delivers it to the stores.

There are lots of steps involved in getting milk to the store for us to buy.

## **Bibliography**

- 1) Carrick, Donald. *Milk*. Greenwillow Books, New York, 1985.
- 2) Llewellyn, Claire. *What's For Lunch? Milk*. Children's Press, London, 1998.
- 3) Gibbons, Gail. *The Milk Makers*. Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1985.
- 4) Fowler, Allan. *Thanks to Cows*. Children's Press, Chicago, 1992.

## Sequence Two – “Seeds”

### Seeds Prewriting and Research

- As a whole group, students brainstorm all the things they can think of that have seeds.
- As a whole group, students brainstorm what they already know about seeds.
- Teacher reads aloud a variety of materials about seeds and seed dispersal.
- Students participate in a nature walk to find a variety of seeds and explore how they travel.
- Students each bring in an interesting fruit or vegetable from home. Fruits and vegetables will be cut open and placed out on tables for students to explore (look, touch, smell). Students will draw and/or write at least two observations of fruits or vegetables and their seeds.

### Writing

- Place students in groups of four for the writing of their report. Assign each group one of the four focus sentences below.
  1. Seeds travel in a variety of ways.
  2. There are many interesting plants that have seeds.
  3. Seeds come in a variety of shapes and sizes.
  4. There are many seeds that are good to eat.
- As a whole group, make a web for each focus sentence.
- In small groups, students begin by copying the focus they have chosen and then writing a minimum of three supporting details for their focus, using additional research as needed. They should write one sentence (if possible) and make one illustration for each detail. Each detail should be on a separate half piece of paper. Tape these pages together to make one long unfolding piece. The focus sentence should be at the top with details unfolding beneath. Have students copy the concluding statement (“Now you know that seeds travel in a variety of ways”).

### Editing

- Have students edit their reports by looking for and tallying spelling words.

### **Publishing and Concluding**

- Have each student read his or her completed piece of writing to a partner who has a different focus.
- As a whole group, students should discuss what they have learned about seeds.
- Each student should have a chance to read his/her report to the group while another student simultaneously acts it out.
- Reports can be displayed in the hallway.

## **Sequence Three**

### **“Individual Research Report”**

- Brainstorm about three topics of interest
- Circle the topic you will report on
- Gather information
  - Teacher arranges for student to visit the library and find books.
  - These books are sent home with the parent helper letter (see sample on page 103).
- Write focus statement on planning sheet
- Mark facts with green or red pen
  - Green facts support focus, red don't
  - Teacher types up green facts with dotted line after each fact
- Cut up green facts
- Make poster-size outline of your topic
- Write title at the top
- Write focus next
- Organize and then glue facts on
- Write a conclusion
- Put name on it
- SHARE!

# Report Planning Sheet

---

**Name**

Topics of Interest

---

---

Research

Focus

---

---

Supporting Details

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents,

Your child is doing a report about \_\_\_\_\_ . We are sending home the research helper forms in hopes that you can spend some time helping him/her learn about the topic he/she has chosen.

Your child should also be bringing one or two books for you to use. Choose one of the books and pick out relevant parts to read to your child. Ask your child to stop you when he or she hears a fact that he or she wants recorded on the helper form. You should have your child retell the fact and then you write it down on the form. If children try to write the facts down themselves, it becomes too much work and they give up.

Please take note that there are four different forms. Use the Book #1 form for the first book you use. If you fill it up, then use the Additional Facts form. Use the Book #2 form for the second book, etc.

The time you spend together should be fun. Skip around the book, don't try to read the whole book. If it becomes tiresome, just STOP!

Feel free to go to the library and find additional resources.

Thanks for helping in this report-writing process; the students are very excited!

Sincerely,

**Research Helper Form**

Helper's Name:

Student's Name:

Topic Researched:

Book #1:

Author:

Publisher & Date:

After reading or skimming a book together, have the student choose some facts for you to record. Please write the facts clearly and simply so the student might be able to read them later.

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:



**Research Helper Form**

Helper's Name:

Student's Name:

Topic Researched:

Book #2:

Author:

Publisher & Date:

After reading or skimming a book together, have the student choose some facts for you to record. Please write the facts clearly and simply so the student might be able to read them later.

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

**Research Helper Form**

Helper's Name:

Student's Name:

Topic Researched:

Book #3:

Author:

Publisher & Date:

After reading or skimming a book together, have the student choose some facts for you to record. Please write the facts clearly and simply so the student might be able to read them later.

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

## Additional Facts

Helper's Name:

Student's Name:

Topic:

Book # \_\_\_\_\_

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

Fact:

## Report Planning Sheet

---

Focus \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I wrote an introduction and it included my focus.

Be prepared to give three examples that support your focus.

Write one or two words to help remind yourself of those examples.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I wrapped it all up with a conclusion!

## Appendix B

This K-4 developmental progression for conventions can be used across genres in all grade levels. This tool was abstracted from separate K-4 rubrics for conventions published by VTSAC in 1999.

<b>K-4 Progression: Conventions (Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics)</b>					
Standard 1.6 Students' independent writing demonstrates command of appropriate English conventions, including grammar, usage, and mechanics.					
Criteria	<u>K</u>	1	2	3	4
<b>SPELLING</b>	*Uses invented or "temporary" spelling.	*Shows phonemic, transitional, and conventional spelling. *Consonant sounds and short vowels represented accurately.	*Conventional spelling of many high-frequency words. *Transitional spelling used when conventional spelling not apparent. *Control over most endings and vowel combinations.	*Uses strategies to spell some irregular or advanced words correctly. *Attention to vowel patterns, prefixes, suffixes, and inflected endings. *Most high-frequency words spelled correctly.	*Mostly conventional spelling. *Correct spelling of compound words, singular and plural grade-level words, and irregular plurals.
<b>PUNCTUATION</b>		*Uses some end punctuation.	*Correctly uses ending punctuation (., ?, !) and uses some commas for lists. *Forms letters correctly.	*Uses apostrophe in contractions. *Uses end punctuation appropriately (., ?, !). *Shows awareness of comma use. Correctly uses commas in lists.	*Uses apostrophes in possessives and contractions. *Uses commas in a series and between city and state. *Consistent use of appropriate end punctuation.
<b>CAPITALIZATION</b>	*Uses a mixture of lower case and capital letters.	*Uses capitals at beginning of sentences and some end punctuation. *Forms most letters correctly; uses lower-case internally.	*Correctly uses capitals at beginning of sentences and for names.	*Consistently capitalizes proper nouns and beginnings of sentences.	*Consistent use of initial capitalization of sentences, proper nouns, and abbreviations.
<b>FORMATTING</b>	*Begins conventional use of direction (left-right, top-bottom).	*Correct letter direction and spacing.		*Begins indenting for paragraphs.	*Indents or blocks paragraphs.
<b>SENTENCE STRUCTURE</b>	*Writes labels, phrases, or sentences.	*Writes complete sentences. *May show some variety in sentence beginnings.	*Sentence structure is appropriate. *Uses expanded sentences and some letter variety.	*Uses a variety of sentence beginnings and structures, including compound sentences.	*Uses compound and/or complex sentences. *May still include a few run-on sentences.
<b>USAGE/ GRAMMAR</b>					*Correct use of non-standard verb forms (went, gave, were). *Simple subject/verb agreement *Use of grade-level homonyms.