

Writing Assessment: A Comparison of
Student Performance by Grade
(1998 - 1999)
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I. Introduction:

In 1999, students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 took the DSTP writing assessment. Like the 1998 DSTP writing, each student responded to a text-based writing task and a stand-alone writing prompt. The text-based writing task links to a reading passage in the DSTP reading assessment. Each student's response to the writing task was evaluated by one reader using the 1-5 scoring rubrics (please see the attachment). The student's writing on the writing prompt was evaluated by two readers using the same scoring rubrics, and reported the sum of the two evaluations on a 2-10 scale. During the 2-hour writing session, students were allowed to use pre-writing skills to develop/organize and draft their writings. Only the final draft was scored. The total writing score is a combination of the text-based writing score and the stand-alone writing score with the lowest score of 3 and the possible highest score of 15. If a student misses either part of the writing assessment (e.g., blank), no valid writing score will be reported.

II. Results of Comparison

Table 1a - 1d present frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations of students' scores and the mode of each writing task/prompt for the 1998 and 1999 DSTP writing by grade.

In 1999, the average writing score is 6.44 for grade3 (with a standard deviation of 1.94), 7.52 for grade 5 (with a standard deviation of 1.86), 7.39 for grade 8 (with a standard deviation of 1.79), and 6.82 for grade 10 (with a standard deviation of 1.95). Fewer students had a total writing scores at/above 13-point in 1999 (1% for grade3; 2% for grade5; 2% for grade 8), but more students in grade 10 had the same score range (2%) than before.

Comparing students' writing scores across years, the average score is higher in 1999 for grade 5 (5.17) than that in 1998 (4.89) and slightly higher for grade 10 (4.87) than before (4.85) on the stand-alone writing. It is found, however, that the third and the eighth graders scored lower in 1999 than the students at the same grade levels in 1998 on the stand-alone writings (4.26 vs. 4.70 for grade 3) (5.29 vs. 5.45 for grade 8). In grade 3, more students received a score below 4-point (28.5%) in 1999 than that in 1998 (17%) on the stand-alone prompt; in grade 8, more students received a score below 1-point (26.5%) than that in 1998 (19.7%) on the text-based writing.

III. Limitations

Previous studies evidenced that the generalization of writing performance is low across writing topics, mode of writing tasks, and occasions. Table 2 shows that the correlation

coefficients between text-based and stand-alone writing scores for the four grade levels are ranged from .45 to .49 in 1999 and from .44 to .54 in 1998. The low correlation from our study provides further evidence to limit the comparison of writing scores over time and be cautious in interpretations.

Table 1a
Comparisons of Writing Scores for 1998 and 1999 DSTP for Grade 3

GRADE 3	1999						1998					
	Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total		Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total	
	Writing	Writing	Writing	Prompt	N	%	Writing	Writing	Writing	Prompt	N	%
Score	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
15											1	0.0
14											3	0.0
13					11	0.1					12	0.2
12					39	0.5					53	0.7
11					93	1.2					152	2.0
10			5	0.1	269	3.5			6	0.1	463	6.2
9			17	0.2	719	9.4			36	0.5	928	12.4
8			61	0.8	1137	14.8			138	1.8	1190	15.8
7			262	3.4	1477	19.2			438	5.8	1373	18.3
6			1149	14.9	1494	19.4			1740	23.2	1398	18.6
5	49	0.6	1801	23.4	1094	14.2	7	0.1	1523	20.3	1053	14.0
4	387	5.0	2199	28.6	779	10.1	500	6.7	2353	31.3	520	6.9
3	2147	27.9	1170	15.2	576	7.5	2132	28.4	739	9.8	367	4.9
2	3391	44.1	1024	13.3			2847	37.9	541	7.2		
1	1714	22.3					2028	27.0				
Total	7688	100.0	7688	100.0	7688	100.0	7514.0		7514	100.0	7514	100.0
Mean	2.18		4.26		6.44		2.15		4.70		6.85	
SD	0.85		1.40		1.94		0.90		1.41		1.98	
Purpose of Writing Task	Persuasive		Informative				Persuasive		Expressive			

Table 1b
Comparisons of Writing Scores for 1998 and 1999 DSTP for Grade 5

GRADE 5	1999						1998					
	Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total		Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total	
	Writing		Writing		Prompt		Writing		Writing		Prompt	
Score	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
15											2	0
14					4	0.1					7	0.1
13					9	0.1					25	0.3
12					108	1.4					133	1.8
11					281	3.7					282	3.8
10			9	0.1	622	8.2			14	0.2	678	9.2
9			5	0.1	1402	18.4			32	0.4	1065	14.4
8			349	4.6	1453	19.1			247	3.3	1208	16.3
7			498	6.5	1294	17.0			518	7.0	1473	19.9
6			2573	33.8	1344	17.7			1682	22.7	1325	17.9
5	4	0.1	1384	18.2	794	10.4	8	0.1	1462	19.8	769	10.4
4	624	8.2	2350	30.9	192	2.5	1205	16.3	2756	37.3	249	3.4
3	2761	36.3	278	3.7	105	1.4	2596	35.1	396	5.4	178	2.4
2	2850	37.5	162	2.1			2365	32.0	287	3.9		
1	1369	18					1220	16.5				
Total	7608	100.0	7608	100.0	7608	100.0	7394	100.0	7394	100.0	7394	100
Mean	2.35		5.17		7.52		2.52		4.89		7.41	
SD	0.87		1.29		1.86		0.96		1.36		1.98	
Purpose of Writing Task	Informative		Informative				Informative		Persuasive			

Table 1c
Comparisons of Writing Scores for 1998 and 1999 DSTP for Grade 8

GRADE 8	1999						1998					
	Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total		Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total	
	Writing		Writing		Writing Prompt		Writing		Writing Prompt		Writing Prompt	
Score	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
15					1	0.0						
14					5	0.1					10	0.1
13					10	0.1					33	0.4
12					78	1.0					205	2.6
11					184	2.4					497	6.3
10			8	0.1	572	7.3			208	0.2	763	9.9
9			25	0.3	1230	15.8			353	0.9	1309	16.5
8			183	2.3	1757	22.5			1710	7.6	1514	19.1
7			764	9.8	1531	19.6			1566	12.7	1266	16.0
6			2755	35.3	1228	15.8			2393	30.2	1152	14.5
5	5	0.1	2006	25.7	825	10.6	2	0.0	1011	19.7	757	9.5
4	360	4.6	1589	20.4	243	3.1	593	7.5	606	21.6	239	3.0
3	2069	26.5	303	3.9	130	1.7	2519	31.7	71	4.4	169	2.1
2	3297	42.3	161	2.1			3255	41.0	16	2.6		
1	2063	26.5					1565	19.7				
Total	7794	100.0	7794	100.0	7794	100.0	7934	100.0	7934	100.0	7934	100.0
Mean	2.10		5.29		7.39		2.27		5.45		7.72	
SD	0.84		1.22		1.79		0.86		1.46		2.06	
Purpose of Writing Task	Persuasive		Informative				Persuasive		Informative			

Table 1d
Comparisons of Writing Scores for 1998 and 1999 DSTP for Grade 10

GRADE 10	1999						1998					
	Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total		Text-Based		Stand Alone		Writing Total	
	Writing	Writing	Writing	Prompt	N	%	Writing	Writing	Writing	Prompt	N	%
Score	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
15												
14												
13					11	0.2					1	0.0
12					29	0.4					16	0.2
11					170	2.5					113	1.7
10			422	0.1	362	5.4					321	4.8
9			568	0.2	780	11.6			1	0.0	848	12.6
8			1948	3.1	1092	16.3			68	1.0	1185	17.6
7			1314	8.6	1239	18.5			392	5.8	1248	18.6
6			1646	24.6	1265	18.9			1703	25.3	1508	22.4
5			575	19.6	989	14.8			1426	21.2	1156	17.2
4	115	1.7	207	29.1	453	6.8	295	4.4	2724	40.5	208	3.1
3	1536	22.9	16	8.5	312	4.7	1687	25.1	271	4.0	120	1.8
2	2903	43.3	6	6.3			2910	43.3	139	2.1		
1	2148	32.1					1823	27.2				
Total	6702	100.0	6702	100.0	6702	100.0	6724	100.0	6724	100.0	6724	100.0
Mean	1.94		4.87		6.82		2.07		4.85		6.92	
SD	0.78		1.45		1.95		0.83		1.15		1.71	
Purpose of Writing Task	Persuasive		Informative				Persuasive		Informative			

Table 2
Correlation Coefficients between Writing Scores on
Text-Based and Stand-Alone Writing by Grade

Grade	Correlation	
	1999	1998
3	.45	.44
5	.46	.45
8	.49	.54
10	.47	.47
