



STUDENT TESTING PROGRAM

Writing

Specifications

September 8, 2005



Delaware Department of Education

DSTP Writing Specifications

Purpose:

This test is intended to assess student's ability to produce clear, coherent writing as described in Standard One.

STANDARD ONE

Students will use written . . . English appropriate for various purposes and audiences.

Written Communication

Writing is a flexible and recursive process that encompasses identifying purposes and audiences, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The use of a variety of technologies will facilitate this process.

Writers will produce texts that exhibit the following textual features, all of which are consistent with the genre and purpose of the writing:

- **Development:** The topic, theme, stand/perspective, argument, or character is fully developed.
- **Organization:** The text exhibits a discernible progression of ideas.
- **Style:** The writer demonstrates a quality of imagination and individuality, and a distinctive voice.
- **Word Choice:** The words are precise, vivid, and economical.

Writers at all grade levels will produce texts that exhibit the following language conventions, all of which are consistent with the genre and purpose of the writing:

- sentence formation
- conventions

Writers will produce examples that illustrate the following discourse classifications:

Expressive (author-oriented) Texts – Written or oral communication intended to allow the speaker or writer to reveal his or her own thoughts, beliefs, feelings, etc. Literary expression is included in this purpose as it is often through literary or creative writing that a person finds the vehicle for such self-expression. The text is author-oriented in that the speaker/writer is concerned primarily with expressing his or her own thoughts, with less focus on the needs of or the effect on an audience.

Informative (subject-oriented) Texts - Written or oral communication intended primarily to convey information. The text is subject-oriented in that the focus is on clear and complete communication of ideas rather than on changing the audience's opinion or expressing the speaker/writer's personal feelings or beliefs.

Argumentative and Persuasive (audience-oriented) Texts - Written or oral communication intended to sway the audience's thinking or action. The text is audience-oriented in that the speaker/writer takes into consideration how best to sway the intended audience (i.e., what information will the audience need to understand the point? What objections to the point might the audience raise—and how can these objections be addressed? What language and/or organizational plan will be most effective with the audience?).

Performance Indicators for Expressive Writing:

By the end of grade 10, students will be able to write expressive (author-oriented) texts, both personal and literary, that

- reveal self-discovery and reflection;
- demonstrate techniques which could include dialogue, characterization, a natural use of language, or effective point of view;
- demonstrate the use of appropriate modes which could include narration and description;
- demonstrate a variety of rhetorical forms.

By the end of grade 8, students will write expressive (author-oriented) texts* both personal and literary, that

- reveal self-discovery and reflection;
- demonstrate experimentation with techniques which could include dialogue;
- demonstrate experimentation with appropriate modes which could include narration and description;
- demonstrate a *variety of* rhetorical forms;
- *demonstrate experimentation with characterization and language natural to the piece.*

By the end of grade 5, students will be able to write expressive (author-oriented) texts* both personal and literary, that

- reveal self-discovery and reflection;
- demonstrate experimentation with techniques which could include dialogue;
- demonstrate experimentation with appropriate modes which could include narration and description;
- *demonstrate experimentation with rhetorical forms.*

By the end of grade 3, students will be able to write expressive (author-oriented) texts, both personal and literary, that

- reveal self-discovery and reflection;
- demonstrate experimentation with techniques which could include dialogue;
- demonstrate experimentation with appropriate modes which could include narration and description.

Performance Indicators for Informative Writing:

By the end of grade 10, students will be able to write informative (subject-oriented) text that

- address the needs of the audience;
- exhibit appropriate modes which could include *complex* description and *complex* narration, *extended* classification, *complex* process analysis, *extended* definition, *complex* cause/effect, and *extended* comparison/contrast and *evaluation*;
- conform to the appropriate formats, which could include letters, summaries, messages, reports, memos, proposals, resumes, or applications;
- contain primary and secondary source documentation, avoiding plagiarism.

By the end of grade 8, students will write informative (subject-oriented) texts* that

- address the needs of the audience;
- exhibit appropriate modes which could include description, narration, classification, process analysis, definition, *cause-effect and comparison/contrast*;
- follow the appropriate formats, which could include letters, summaries, messages, reports, *memos, proposals, resumsés, or applications*;
- contain primary and secondary source *documentation*, avoiding plagiarism.

By the end of grade 5, students will write informative (subject-oriented) texts* that

- address the needs of the audience;
- exhibit appropriate modes which could include description, narration, classification, simple process analysis, and definition;
- conform to the appropriate formats, which could include letters, summaries, messages, and reports;
- *contain information from primary and secondary sources, avoiding plagiarism.*

By the end of grade 3, students will be able to write informative (subject-oriented) texts that

- begin to address the needs of the audience;
- exhibit appropriate modes which could include description, narration, classification, simple process analysis, simple definition;
- conform to the appropriate formats, which could include letters, summaries, messages, and reports.

Performance Indicators for Argumentative/Persuasive Writing:

By the end of grade 10, students will be able to write argumentative and persuasive (audience-oriented) texts that

- address the needs of the audience;
- communicate a clear-cut position on an issue;
- support the position with relevant information, which could include personal and expert opinions, examples, statistics, and data, quotations and others' opinions, a possible refutation of the opposing view point;
- exhibit evidence of reasoning.

By the end of grade 8, students will write argumentative and persuasive (audience-oriented) texts* that

- address the needs of the audience;
- communicate a clear-cut position on an issue;
- support the position with relevant information, which could include personal and expert opinions, examples, *statistics, and data*;
- exhibit evidence of reasoning.

By the end of grade 5, students will write argumentative and persuasive (audience-oriented) texts* that

- *address* the needs of the audience;
- communicate a clear-cut position on an issue;
- support the position with relevant information, which could include personal *and expert* opinions and examples;
- exhibit evidence of reasoning.

By the end of grade 3, students will be able to write argumentative and persuasive (audience-oriented) texts that

- begin to consider the needs of the audience;
- communicate a clear-cut position on an issue;
- support the position with relevant information, which could include personal opinions and examples;
- exhibit evidence of reasoning.

Grade 10 PI

Test Components:

The test will consist of the following components:

Stand-Alone Writing Prompt

Presents a situation to which a student is asked to write a revised second draft of an expressive, informative, or persuasive response. The prompt identifies the audience, purpose, and form for the writing.

Text-Based Writing Prompt

Presents one or more thought-provoking texts to which a student is asked to write an edited first draft of an informative or persuasive response. The prompt identifies the audience, purpose, and form for the writing.

Prewriting Sheet

Available for students to organize their thoughts before beginning their drafts for the stand-alone and the text-based writing prompts.

Scratch Paper

Used by students to assist their writing.

Writing Checklist

Used by students to review their writing.

General Writing Prompt Specifications

- Sentences are simple, short, and easy to understand.
- Vocabulary used is at or below grade level.
- The audience is specified.
- The audience is appropriate for the tested grade level.
- The purpose for writing is clearly identified.
- The form is clearly identified.
- Writer's role, when specified, is appropriate for the tested grade level.

Passage Specifications for Text-Based Writing Prompts:

- Literary, informative, technical, OR some combination of paired texts may be used.
- Reading level is one or more grade levels below the tested grade. Readability formulas (e.g., Lexiles, Flesch-Kincaid, Dale-Chall) will be used to help inform the decision about grade level of passages; however, the actual decision will be based on teacher judgment.
- Passage length will be similar to the ranges given for passages in the reading test.
- Concepts presented in the text are appropriate for students at the tested grade.
- Paired texts present opposing views or different perspectives on the same topic.
- Contains situations, concepts, or characters that invite students to connect to the text(s) and respond in a meaningful way.

Literary texts will

- present a problem or situation that is not solved, thus requiring the reader to consider possible solutions or alternative, OR
- present a problem or situation that is solved, thus allowing the reader to judge the appropriateness of the solution or present and justify an alternate solution OR
- present a situation that requires the reader to make a judgment about a character's actions OR
- be distinctive in style, character development, word choice, or other characteristics that allow the reader to evaluate the author's craft.

Paired literary texts will

- be sufficiently different in some way to allow the reader to select a preferred text and explain the reasons for the preference OR
- contain characters/situations that are similar or different in such a way that the reader can compare characters/situations or make judgments about the characters/situations as related to the reader's life OR
- be similar and/or different in style, character development, word choice, or other characteristics that allow the reader to compare and contrast the authors' craft.

Informative texts* will

- present information that can be evaluated by the reader for appropriateness for the reader's use
- present information that can be evaluated by the reader to take and support a position regarding the topic OR
- present information that readers can use along with personal knowledge and beliefs to support a premise about the topic OR
- present one or both sides of an issue that allows readers to agree or disagree and support the position taken.

*Graphic aids (e.g. charts, graphs, diagrams) may be included with the informative text; however, the emphasis of the text should be to provide information to the reader.

Paired informative texts will

- present both sides of an issue to allow the reader to take and support a position on the issue OR
- present information on a topic from several different perspectives to allow the reader to synthesize this information and form a personal perspective.

Paired informative/literary texts will

- present information that helps readers better understand and/or connect to the characters, situations, etc. in a literary text OR
- present characters, situations, settings, etc. that helps readers better understand/interpret the informative text.

Technical texts will

- present information or directions that can be evaluated by the reader for appropriateness for the reader's personal use OR
- present information in a manner that allows the reader to evaluate the effectiveness or use of graphics, format, layout, etc.

Paired technical texts will

- be sufficiently different to allow readers to select and justify the use of one of the texts for a given situation.

Paired literary/technical texts will

- include a technical text that presents a set of criteria for judging or selecting a literary submission and a literary text(s) to allow the reader to evaluate the text(s) with the criteria.

Paired informative/technical texts will

- include information will help the reader to understand/interpret/apply the technical text OR
- include technical information that helps the reader to clarify/support/verify/reject information or a position taken in the informative text.

Technical Aspects of the Assessment:

Testing Time 2 ½ hours for stand alone
 1 ½ hour for text based

Answer Document: 4 pages for stand alone
 2 pages for text based

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