

Washington Assessment of Student Learning in Writing

Grade 7 Writing Anchor Set Annotations

from the Spring 2009
Washington Assessment of
Student Learning in Writing

Section I:

Introduction

I. Introduction	
• About the WASL in Writing.....	i
• How to Use This Document.....	iii
• Writing Prompts	iv
• COS Scoring Guide.....	v
• Conventions Scoring Guide.....	vi



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2009 Writing Grade 7 Anchor Set Annotations

Table of Contents

I. Introduction:	
• About the WASL in Writing	i
• How to Use this Book	iii
• Writing Prompts	iv
• Writing Scoring Guides	
○ Content, Organization, and Style Scoring Guide	v
○ Conventions Scoring Guide	vi
II. Expository Anchor Set and Annotations	
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 1	1
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 2	9
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 3	23
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 4	44
III. Persuasive Anchor Set and Annotations	
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 1	1
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 2	9
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 3	24
• Student Papers Receiving a COS Score of 4	45
IV. Conventions Anchor Set and Annotations	
• Student Papers Receiving a CONV Score of 0	1
• Student Papers Receiving a CONV Score of 1	14
• Student Papers Receiving a CONV Score of 2	25

About the Washington Assessment of Student Learning in Writing Grade 7

Why test writing?

Learning to write is vital to a good education. It is an essential skill for succeeding in higher education, the workplace, and lifelong learning. Writing requires students to express their knowledge with purpose and coherence. As students learn to write, they sharpen their ability to clarify thoughts and organize ideas. Writing teaches mental discipline and precision by promoting careful, analytical thinking and demanding that students follow the rigors of correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and usage/format.

Purposes

For the WASL, 7th-grade students will be asked to write to two prompts, one for the purpose to explain and the other to persuade. Although the second Essential Academic Learning Requirement states that students be able to write for “different...purposes,” for the state assessment, holding the types of purposes constant will help to ensure that the task demands be consistent from year to year. The decision to limit the number of purposes assessed is in no way meant to limit classroom instruction or district and classroom-based assessments. Writing for the purposes of explaining and persuading were chosen because learning to write for these purposes is essential if students are to perform well on the tasks expected of them in the 7th grade as well as in the years to come.

Forms

For each prompt there will be one of two designated forms: a letter or an essay. The form will not be scored.

Audience

The designated audience will be appropriate for the grade level, purpose, and content of the prompt, e.g., teacher, principal, new student, parents, adults, school board, editor, community officials. (*Note: A student will not write to his or her friend.*)

Prompts

Each prompt will clearly state a designated topic, audience, purpose, and form. Research has shown that in order to be effective, a writer must understand the role and interaction of topic, audience, purpose, and form. Each prompt will contain an underlined verb – to explain or to persuade – which will serve to cue writing for the intended purpose. In addition, each prompt will also specify a form, e.g., a letter or an essay. Therefore, prompts are written as follows:

- You have been in school for several years now. Which grade from kindergarten through seventh did you enjoy the most (*setup/context*)? Write a multiple-paragraph essay (*form*) for a teacher you have now (*audience*) explaining (*purpose*) why you enjoyed it (*topic*).
- Some schools are considering putting video cameras in classrooms to ensure student safety. Do you agree or disagree with this idea (*setup/context*)? Write a multiple-paragraph letter (*form*) to your principal (*audience*) persuading (*purpose*) him or her to support your position (*topic*).

Writing to Explain

For the purposes of the state assessment, the prompt is designed to elicit an explanation. The writer should present information in a way that enhances the reader's understanding of the topic. Effective writing to explain is usually, but not always, characterized by the following:

- narrowed topic and focus on main idea;
- well-chosen supporting details (elaboration) which may include description, examples, anecdotes, and/or reasons;
- a logical, understandable organizational pattern;
- an introduction and conclusion.
- transitions to connect ideas;
- commitment to the topic (voice);

Writing to Persuade

For the purposes of the state assessment, the prompt is written to persuade the designated audience to support a position or point of view, make a decision, or take an action. Effective writing to persuade is usually, but not always, characterized by the following:

- topic or issue clearly stated;
- a clear position;
- more than one argument to support position;
- reasons, examples, anecdotes, facts and/or statistics to support arguments;
- a clear, logical organizational strategy which makes the best case for the position;
- transitions to connect position, arguments, and evidence;
- a consideration of the opposing arguments;
- an awareness of the audience demonstrated in the choice of words, details, and voice;
- persuasive language and techniques;
- an effective persuasive conclusion, such as a call for action.

A final note

Effective writing instruction includes teaching the traits of quality writing; a variety of purposes and audiences; various forms of writing such as letters, newspaper articles, editorials, and science laboratory reports; the writing process; and self-reflection/goal setting. The overall goal of a comprehensive writing program is to support students in becoming clear, competent, and reflective writers who have the ability to adjust their writing for topic, audience, and purpose.

How to Use These Documents

These documents contain the anchor papers used to score the 2009 Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in writing, Grade 7. Anchor papers are concrete examples that illustrate the intent of the scoring guides. They serve as a reference point or "anchor" to ensure that scorers interpret and apply the scoring guides consistently.

The papers shown exemplify the full range of score points possible. For each of the two writing prompts students can earn up to:

- four points for content, organization, and style; and
- two points for conventions (grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and spelling).

The documents are divided into several sections:

- Student work on an **expository** prompt earning 1, 2, 3, and 4 point(s) in the area of content, organization, and style;
- Student work on a **persuasive** prompt earning 1, 2, 3, and 4 point(s) in the area of content, organization, and style; and
- Student work earning 0, 1, and 2 point(s) in the area of **conventions** (grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and spelling).

At the beginning of each section you will see a list of typed annotations and scores for each paper within the section. The annotations and papers are numbered such as 7EA8a. This should be read as:

- 7= Grade Level (this is the same on every example)
- E= Expository ("P" for persuasive or "C" for conventions)
- A8= The number of the anchor paper (in this case #8)
- a= The first page of the students response; "b" would indicate the second page, "c" the third, and so on.

This is the numbering system used by the state's testing contractor. We have used this same numbering system to ensure accurate identification of papers should any questions arise. Make sure the number of the annotation you are reading matches the student sample. The score is shown at the end of each anchor paper: "COS" for content, organization, and style or "CONV" for conventions.

Review of these examples should help you better understand the level of work expected of students who meet the standard in writing. For additional assistance, please contact Nikki Elliott-Schuman, Writing Assessment Specialist, at 360.725.6341 or email nikki.elliottschuman@k12.wa.us.

2009 Washington Assessment of Student Learning in Writing

Grade 7 Prompts

Expository Prompt

Most Enjoyable Grade

You have been in school for several years now. Which grade from kindergarten through seventh did you enjoy the most? Write a multiple-paragraph essay for a teacher you have now explaining why you enjoyed it.

Persuasive Prompt

Video Cameras in Classrooms

Some schools are considering putting video cameras in classrooms to ensure student safety. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Write a multiple-paragraph letter to your principal persuading him or her to support your position.

Grade 7

Content, Organization, and Style (COS) Scoring Guide

Points	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains consistent focus on topic and has selected relevant details • Has a logical organizational pattern and conveys a sense of wholeness and completeness • Provides transitions which clearly serve to connect ideas • Uses language effectively by exhibiting word choices that are engaging and appropriate for intended audience and purpose • Includes sentences, or phrases where appropriate, of varied length and structure • Allows the reader to sense the person behind the words
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains adequate focus on the topic and has adequate supporting details • Has a logical organizational pattern and conveys a sense of wholeness and completeness, although some lapses occur • Provides adequate transitions in an attempt to connect ideas • Uses adequate language and appropriate word choices for intended audience and purpose • Includes sentences, or phrases where appropriate, that are somewhat varied in length and structure • Provides the reader with some sense of the person behind the words
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an inconsistent focus and includes some supporting details, but may include extraneous or loosely related material • Shows an attempt at an organizational pattern, but exhibits little sense of wholeness and completeness • Provides transitions which are weak or inconsistent • Has a limited and predictable vocabulary which may not be appropriate for the intended audience and purpose • Shows limited variety in sentence length and structure • Attempts somewhat to give the reader a sense of the person behind the words
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates little or no focus and few supporting details which may be inconsistent or interfere with the meaning of the text • Has little evidence of an organizational pattern or any sense of wholeness and completeness • Provides transitions which are poorly utilized, or fails to provide transitions • Has a limited or inappropriate vocabulary for the intended audience and purpose • Has little or no variety in sentence length and structure • Provides the reader with little sense of the person behind the words

Grade 7 Conventions (CONV) Scoring Guide

Points	Description
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently follows the rules of Standard English for grammar and usage • Consistently follows the rules of Standard English for spelling of commonly used words • Consistently follows the rules of Standard English for capitalization • Consistently follows the rules of Standard English for punctuation • Exhibits the use of complete sentences except where purposeful fragments are used for effect • Indicates paragraphs consistently
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally follows the rules of Standard English for grammar and usage • Generally follows the rules of Standard English for spelling of commonly used words • Generally follows the rules of Standard English for capitalization • Generally follows the rules of Standard English for punctuation • Generally exhibits the use of complete sentences except where purposeful fragments are used for effect • Indicates paragraphs for the most part
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly does not follow the rules of Standard English for grammar and usage • Mostly does not follow the rules of Standard English for spelling of commonly used words • Mostly does not follow the rules of Standard English for capitalization • Mostly does not follow the rules of Standard English for punctuation • Exhibits errors in sentence structure that impede communication • Mostly does not indicate paragraphs

Principles of Holistic Scoring:

- **Density:** We weigh the proportion of errors to the amount of writing done well. This includes the ratio of errors to length.
- **Variety:** We consider the range of errors across the categories included in the rubric (usage, grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, sentence formation, and paragraphing).
- **Severity:** We weigh basic errors more heavily than higher level errors. We also weigh basic spelling and sentence formation errors more heavily.