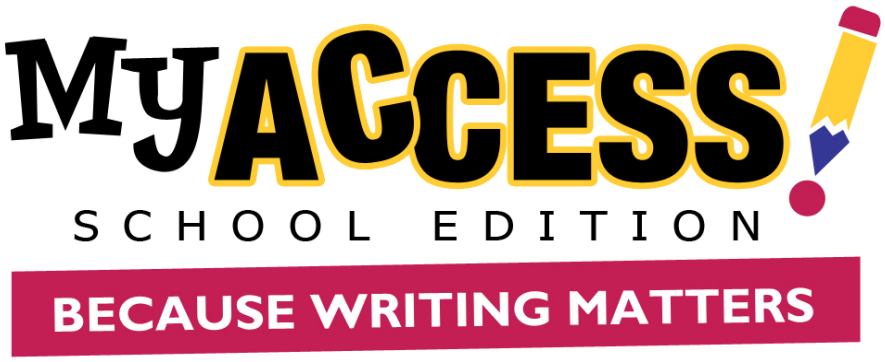

MY Access! ® Instructional Guide And Lesson Plans

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- have an instructional guide written by an English teacher and author, and a curriculum specialist to help you integrate the Vantage program with your existing ELA or writing program - with both "big picture" aids such as course designs and "key detail" aids such as how to follow up on student responses to activities

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My Access!® Writing Program Features

Vantage writing prompts include literary, persuasive, and informational and independent writing tasks. Here is an example of an independent writing task.

Your Task: Write an essay about a person in history or literature, or a person you know, who faced a conflict between what he or she thought was right and what others in the family or community thought was right. In your essay, be sure to include:

- who the person is and what he or she thought was right who the others were and what they thought was right
- how the person tried to resolve the conflict—what action was taken
- what the results or after-effects of the decision and action were
- an introduction, a body, and a conclusion

Vantage reading/writing prompts also include informational and literary/critical on-demand tasks based on given texts, as well as literary/critical tasks based on books previously read. Here is an example of a task based on prior reading:

Prompt: The effect on the reader of *The Outsiders*
Standard: Literary, Critical
Type: Specific text-based

Background: In *The Outsiders*, several other literary works are mentioned. Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay," gives a rather pessimistic view of life, suggesting that the best experiences can't last for long. *Gone With the Wind*, a novel set at the time of the Civil War, is the book Ponyboy reads to Johnny when they are hiding in the church. At the end of *The Outsiders*, Johnny writes a note and puts it in the novel, where he knows Ponyboy will find it. Johnny's message to Ponyboy is optimistic or hopeful: "There's still lots of good in the world."

Your Task: Tell whether you believe the overall effect of this book on a reader is optimistic (hopeful) or pessimistic. Consider the characters and events as well as the poem and war novel. Support your opinion with specific references to the book. Do not simply retell the story.

Guidelines:

- Tell whether you believe the overall effect of this book on a reader is optimistic (hopeful) or pessimistic
- Use specific, accurate, relevant information about the characters and events of the novel to support your opinion
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for an English class
- Follow the conventions of standard American English

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Scoring feedback is accurate and immediate

Within seconds of submitting an essay response, the student will receive a score. You can choose for the score to be scored on a variety of customized rubrics.

Customized rubrics allow you versatility for scoring and instruction

You can have scores reported on grade-appropriate rubrics that include 6-point analytical (separate scores for 5 domains of writing), 4-point analytical, 6-point holistic, or 4-point holistic, whatever best serves your needs and is most consistent with test rubrics in your state.

After receiving online feedback, students can revise essays and receive new scores

After reading a score analysis, a student who received a low score on "development" might revise the essay by further developing ideas and then resubmit it to be scored again. More on this targeted revising in section IV.

The online Writer's Guide provides students with self-selected or teacher-directed instruction and developmental activities for all five domains of scoring

In the middle of a writing session, a student can access the Writer's Guide to get advice and models for development, organization, or any of the other traits—and then return to finish the writing task. Used independently, the Guide offers models, explanations, and developmental activities.

We strongly recommend that you spend fifteen minutes test-driving the Guide so you know the explanations and activities available there.

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Use rubrics as powerful tools for learning about writing

First, hand out rubrics and highlight points, key words at each level of each domain—what separates 3 from 4 in focus and meaning? Use a model paper to show what the rubric description really means.

Ask students to assess their own writing samples with a rubric (then machine score to verify). Then students can write goals, using the language of the rubric, for one or two domains at a time, starting at the top. Finally, they can plan what specific "moves" they have to make to achieve those goals—this is where you come in, helping them get there.

Many students find it helpful to use a rubric and read its descriptions as a checklist while they are writing.

Students must be able to use key words to become better writers

The most important vocabulary words in a writing course are process words and other words of art. Early in the course, it is important to review these key terms so you and your class will be speaking the same language.

Analyze: To analyze is to take apart or break down into parts. When you **analyze** a task, you read it carefully to see how many parts it has, who the audience is supposed to be, and so on.

Task or prompt: This is a writing assignment. A **task** could be informational, literary/critical, or persuasive.

Text: A **text** is any piece of writing, from a recipe to a wanted poster to the last essay you wrote. Some of the prompts or tasks in this program have **texts** or reading that you must base your answers on.

Rubric: A rubric is a numbered scoring guide that tells you what things look like at each level. The "6" box for Meaning/Focus tells you what an essay scored a "6" for that characteristic will look like.

Characteristic or **domain** or **trait:** Our scoring rubrics are made up of the five **characteristics** or **domains or traits** that make writing effective. Each **characteristic** is shown on a 6-point or 4-point scale on the rubric**.**

Controlling or **central idea:** The main idea of the essay is the **controlling** or **central idea.** In tasks containing texts to read, the **controlling idea** makes the connection between the task and the texts. Establishing and maintaining a **controlling or central idea** is a key feature in Meaning/Focus.

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Relevant: If you develop an idea with **relevant** detail, you will be using detail that is related to the topic, and not just throwing in random facts or other details.

Voice: Your spoken **voice** is unique. People who know you can recognize you by your **voice**. In writing, you can also develop a unique **voice** which can let other recognize you by the way you write.

You can conduct early diagnosis

Within the first 10 days of class you can develop an "entrance portfolio" for each student, analyze the pattern of responses, and start making focused plans for writers with different problems. See the discussion that follows in part IV.

You can monitor the electronic portfolio with ease

From your computer, monitor the performance of your student, Terry. You can track patterns of where she does well, where she does not so well, on what kinds of prompts, what domains are the problems, what she has tried for solutions, and what her development as a writer looks like, holistically and across five domains.

Imagine what group Terry might fall into in the discussion beginning the next section and you'll see in "Troubleshooting" how instruction might be planned for Terry's specific profile.

As a writing teacher, your work will change in many ways

- You will be more an analyst and less a proofreader and scorekeeper.
- You will be able to read more *for* ideas, and respond more *to* ideas
- You can count on reliable tracking of progress toward test requirements, without doing all the drudge work yourself.
- For some papers, you can use Vantage's reliable score reports, and can get printouts, too if you want specifics.
- In short, you'll be *assigning* more writing but *correcting* less on if.
- Most important: You will enjoy more being a writing teacher and reading student writing.

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What are the Writer's Three Biggest Problems?

Essential Questions:

1. *What are a writer's three biggest problems?*
2. *How do these connect with the stages of the writing process?*
3. *How can these problems be solved one at a time?*

Objectives:

- To show that there are stages in the writing process, with problems to solve at each stage.

Materials and Preparation:
Before Class:

- Print out copies of student activity worksheet "What are the Writer's Three Biggest Problems?"
- Print out copies of student activity worksheet " What you do During the Writing Process"

Time**:** 30 minutes

Teacher Background Information: Students tend to think of writing as one "thing." Many believe that either you can write or you can't write. They need to think of writing as you might think of driving a car—a series of coordinated moves that get you from point A to point B. They will find writing easier to work on when they can break it down into smaller problems and work on them one at a time.

Lesson:

1. Say, Here is one of Vantage's middle school writing prompts. This one is an independent writing prompt, meaning it has no literary or informational text to read and requires no special prior knowledge.

Let's look at the prompt and see how it poses the writer's three biggest problems. In the numbered spaces below the problem box, write what you think would be the three biggest problems you would face in writing an effective essay that would receive top marks.

2. Explain to students to be sure to write about three different problems, and to be specific about the nature of the problem. "Writing it well" is not a specific problem. "Making my ideas clear" is more specific. "Having enough to say" is more specific.

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PROMPT:

Your school is considering a move to a year-round school schedule. The year-round schedule would have students attend school year-round with several three-week breaks as compared to the current school year calendar which begins in the fall and ends in the spring. Do you feel that a year-round schedule is more or less beneficial to students than the current school calendar? Write a letter to your principal persuading him or her to accept your position on a move to a year-round schedule.

Remember to:

- establish your opinion or position and provide specific facts, details, and example to support the opinion or position
- arrange ideas in an organized manner
- speak in a convincing and knowledgeable way

My first big problem would be:

_____

_____

My next big problem would be:

_____

_____

My last big problem would be:

_____

_____

3. Elicit responses from students and write them on an overhead or front board. As you get them, try to arrange them in three groups in your display:

- **analyzing and prewriting**
- **drafting and organizing**
- **evaluating and revising**

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4. Discuss the responses and the groupings. Ask questions to elicit problems students have not expressed, such as, "What about reading the prompt and figuring out what to do—is that a problem?"

5. Tell students that in this task or prompt lie the three problems writers always face, no matter what the task or prompt.

- How do I figure out what to do (analyze the task,) and get started (prewriting)?
- How do I develop some ideas (drafting) and organize a response?
- How do I rewrite this draft (evaluating, revising, and editing) into a finished product?

Summing Up:

Writing an essay in response to a prompt isn't a single problem. Rather, it's a series of problems connected to the stages of the writing process. Using MY Access! ® will help you to solve all of these problems.

For you teachers, integrating MY Access! ® in to your writing program will help you to help writers, and will also help writers to help themselves.

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What are the Qualities of Effective Writing?

Essential Questions:

- What makes effective writing?
- Gold-Medal Writing-What are its characteristics?
- How do we evaluate all the domains of writing?

Objectives:

- To help students recognize the qualities of effective writing so that they can improve their work in all of these qualities or domains.
- To provide students with an opportunity to practice MY Access!® required skills:
    - **Logging on**
    - **Locating available prompt**
    - **Keying in a response**
    - **Submitting for scoring**
    - **Viewing individual reports**

Materials and Preparation:

Before Class:

- Print out copies of rubrics (holistic and analytical 6-pt or 4-pt)
- Print out copies of student activity sheets: pg 5-8, 9,10
- Online option:
    - Log on to My Access! ® (www.myaccess.com) as a teacher
    - Click on Assignments for your group.
    - Click on Add Assignments button. Click browse and locate the prompt "Year-round Schooling" (*or a prompt of your choice*). Make this prompt available to your group.

Materials:

- My Access!® Writer's Guide sections 1.4
- Activity sheets: pg 5-8, 9-10
- Rubrics (6 point or 4-point)
- Sample score feedback (if completed offline)

Time: 2 class periods

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Teacher Background Information:

For students to write well, they must know the qualities of good writing. They might think, for example, that good writing is simply writing which has no spelling or punctuation mistakes in it. By learning the domains or characteristics of good writing—as well as the rubric's descriptions of the various levels in each domain, students will be able to write better first drafts and revisions of their work. They will learn to attend to focus and meaning before they worry about spelling and punctuation.

Lesson (model):

1. Have students look at a list of sports such as competitive diving, gymnastics, skating, or skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, BMX riding, swimming. Say, "If you've watched any of these sports, you know that judges put up a score after the performance. The higher the score, the better. Do you know what goes into that score? Do you know how judges come up with a 5.8 or a 9.6? If you participate in one of these sports, you probably *do*; you have to know because you're being *tested*. It's just as important to know the score when your writing is being evaluated. In fact, you need to know how to evaluate your own work before you turn it in to be scored."

2. Explain to students that the **rubric** or **scoring guide** we'll use in the MY Access!® writing program has five traits, domains, or characteristics of good writing. Explain that although not all authorities agree that there are exactly five traits (or domains), the traits or characteristics that follow show up on everyone's list in one form or another.

3. Hand out the rubric and the writing samples.

4. **Say**, let's take a closer look at each trait (domain) in more detail. Have students read across the column headers. Ask for definitions of key words such as **"purposeful"** and **"transitional."** Supply meanings for the key words they cannot define. Show students that the rubric shows these domains or characteristics of writing:

- focus/meaning
- content/development
- organization
- language use and style
- conventions/mechanics

Now have students read down each column, highlighting or underlining the words that mark the boundaries from one level to the next. For example, "develops ideas adequately" describes a less effective paper than does "develops ideas fully and clearly."

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5. Beginning with **Focus and Meaning**, read out loud (or hand out photocopies) the writing examples below, asking students to "rate" the writing for "focus".

Say, effective writers stay focused on the topic or controlling (central or main) idea. For example, if you are asked to explain whether or not you like baseball, you will focus on baseball and not get sidetracked and write about something else."

1. Ask students to review example 1 and 2 for **Focus and Meaning**. In the spaces below have students "rate" the sample for focus and meaning. Tell students to give a reason for each score by taking language from the rubric that best describes the response.

A "4" for Focus & Meaning on a 4-point rubric scale or a "6" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

I. *I really don't like baseball because I think it is too boring. Most of the game the players are just standing around doing nothing. I think it is stupid to run around the bases after hitting a ball with a bat.*

A "1" for Focus & Meaning on a 4-point rubric scale or "1" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

II. *I really like baseball bacause I think it is fun. My cousin plays on the same team as me. He's got a pet frog at home. We spend a lot of time playing together in the summer.*

Ask students to help you summarize what it means to say that writing has "strong or weak" focus.

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2. **Content and Development.** Say, "if you are asked to read *The Three Little* Pigs and asked why the third little pig was smart, you will write about specific things that happened in the story."

A "4" for Content & Development on a 4-point rubric scale or a "6" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

I. *The third little pig was smart because he built his house out of brick. He knew the straw and sticks were not good enough to build a house. A house made of brick would stand when a wolf came to huff and puff and blow the house down.*

A "1" for Content & Development on a 4-point rubric scale or "1" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

II. *The third little pig was smart because he didnt get eaten. Wolves like to eat pigs. Pigs need to be protected from wolves so they won't get eaten.*

Ask students to help you summarize what it means to say that writing has "strong or weak" content and development.

6. Organization.

Say, effective writers plan what they have to say in a specific order, keeping what they write organized. For example, if you are asked to write about why you like pizza, you would organize your ideas in a logical order or sequence. Ask students to listen (or read silently) as you read each response, and rate each writing sample as a 1 or a 4 (or 1 and a 6 on a 6 point scale)

A "4" for Organization on a 4-point rubric scale or a "6" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

I. *I like pizza because you can pick it up and eat it with your hands. Even more, I like it because of the melted cheese on top that stretches from your mouth when you bit into it. But the best thing about pizza is the crust. I love to munch on the thick crispy crust after eating the rest of the piece.*

A "1" for Organization on a 4-point rubric scale or "1" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

II. *A reason I like to eat pizza is the melted cheese that stretches from your mouth then you take a bite. I like the thick crispy crust at the end of each slice. I like that you can eat it with your fingers*

Ask students to help you summarize what it means to say that writing has "strong or weak" organization.

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7. Language Use, Voice and Style.

Say, effective writers chose the words the use carefully, showing they know who the audience is and keeping them interested. For example, if asked to explain what students do in a typical day to a new student, a writer won't start every sentence the same way."

A "4" for Language Use, Voice and Style on a 4-point rubric scale or a "6" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

I. *We start the day with two hours of Language Arts, kind of boring but we read some cool stories. After that we get a break from the classroom and go to Special. My favorites are Phys. Ed and Computer Lab. Next we have an hour of either Science or Social Studies. Science is awesome when we get to do experiments. Finally, your favorite or mine, lunch and recess. Last but not least, we end the day with an hour of Math. We do lots of different things in Math, so I think you'll actually like it*

A "1" for Language Use, Voice and Style on a 4-point rubric scale or a "1" on a 6-point rubric scale may look like:

II. *First we have two hours of Language Arts. Then we go to Special. Then we have Science or Social Studies for an hour. Then we go to lunch and recess. Then we go to Math. Then we go home*

Ask students to help you summarize what it means to say that writing has "strong or weak" style and language use.

8. Mechanics & Conventions: Effective writers check their work to see that they have used proper spelling, punctuation and grammar.

A "4" for Mechanics & Conventions on a 4-point scale or a "6" on a 6-point scale would look like:

I. *I really don't like baseball because I think it is too boring. Most of the game the players are just standing around doing nothing. I think it is stupid to run around the bases after hitting a ball with a bat.*

A "1" for Mechanics & Conventions on a 4-point scale or a 6-point scale would look like:

II. *i really don't like baseball becus I think it is to bori ng most of the game the players is just standin around doing nothing i thinks it is stupid to run them bases after hitting a ball with a bat*

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Practice

1. Hand out copies of student writing samples. Tell students that MY Access!® will evaluate by looking at its qualities and assign the score.

2. Say, before we use the program, you will practice one more time by evaluating an actual student response to a prompt. Using the practice rating sheet you were given you will score the first writing sample for each trait/domain using the analytical rubric. Give a reason for each score by taking language from the rubric that best describes the response.

For the second activity give students a paper scored as a "3" and tell them to prove it by finding evidence in the paper that fits the "3" description on the appropriate rubric.

Allow time for students to work individually or in teams of two. Once students have completed the task share and discuss the student responses.

Record some of their responses on an overhead or front board by arranging them under the headings of "focus," etc. Discuss with student whether the comments they wrote for each domain would be helpful to the student who wrote the paper. Would their comments give useful ideas to the writer on what and how to revise the writing?

This next section can be completed on or offline. Online provides an opportunity for students to "key in" text and experience the system without writing an actual essay.

Say, let's see how MY Access!® would give evaluations and feedback to this writer—and examine how the feedback could help the writer improve this paper and future papers. Read the feedback that follows and notice that, for each domain, there is advice about how to improve the paper. For each domain, underline the advice the writer should follow to improve the essay.

Mary, on a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment was rated a 3. Your response was evaluated on the basis of how well it communicates its message considering important areas of writing including focus and meaning, content and development, organization, language use and style and mechanics and conventions.

A response that receives a score of three communicates its message to a limited degree. Typically, a response at this level has some evidence of purpose, but that may not be totally clear and/or may lack a continued focus on the main idea.

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While there is evidence of development, there is typically a lack of support and supporting detail. There is some evidence of organization, but with limited order and sequence of ideas present. The sentence structure shows some errors in sentence structure, with little variety and noticeable errors in usage and word choice. The response typically shows poor word choice and usage with several distracting errors in mechanical conventions such as spelling and punctuation.

A more detailed analysis of your response is provided for each of the five important writing areas below.

Writing Analysis

Your response was also evaluated in terms of five important traits of writing, focus and meaning, content development, organization, language use, voice and style and mechanics and conventions. Each of the five areas was evaluated on a scale ranging from one to six.

Focus & Meaning

On a scale of one to six, your response to **this assignment was rated a 3 for focus.** Focus relates to your ability to present a consistent, unified message and stay on topic.

Mary, now that you are ready to revise, try some of these ideas to improve the focus in your writing.

Revision Goal 1: Refine your thesis statement.

1. Your thesis statement is what you believe about the issue. Did you state your opinion/position in one sentence? Highlight this sentence in yellow.

2. Read your thesis statement carefully. Is there a better or more creative way to state your opinion?

Example:

Before Revision: Many of my friends have after-school jobs. I talked to a few of them about the advantages and disadvantages of having jobs after school. Working at an after-school job is in my best interests, because it will help me pay for college.

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Frank's Strategy: *I have an opinion statement, and it is the last sentence of the introduction. I want modify it so it conveys my opinion better.*

After Revision: Many of my friends have after-school jobs. I talked to a few of them about the advantages and disadvantages of having jobs after school. Because my school plans are very expensive for my parents to support, I have decided to seek an after-school job to help them.

Frank's Reflection: *I rewrote the thesis statement in a more creative way that brings my parents into the introduction.*

Revision Goal 2: Understand your purpose and audience.

1. Read the prompt and find the audience. Are you writing for friends and students, for parents or other adults, for newspaper readers?

2. Make sure the words you wrote in your essay are appropriate for your audience. For example, if you are writing a formal persuasive essay, you should NOT use slang, contractions, or other versions of informal language.

Example:

Before Revision: I need to earn dough for other expenses like textbooks and computer junk. There are unplanned expenses as well, like spending money to use in town with friends and last-minute school supplies for class stuff.

Frank's Strategy: *I used slang and informal words in this paragraph. Since I am writing to my parents, I need it to be more formal.*

After Revision: I need to earn money for other expenses like textbooks and computer supplies. There are unplanned expenses as well, like spending money to use in town with friends and last-minute school supplies for class projects.

Frank's Reflection: *I changed the slang words "dough" and "junk" to "money" and "supplies." Finally, I replaced "stuff" with "projects."*

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Development & Content

Score Point 3

Mary, as you revise, you can improve your essay by including details to support your position. Try some of these ideas.

Revision Goal 1: Include reasons to support your thesis statement.

1. Highlight, in blue, the reasons you include to support your thesis statement. If you did not include many, add more now.

2. Make each reason a topic sentence in a new paragraph. (HINT: You can start by making each reason the first sentence of each paragraph.)

Example:

Before Revision: *Thesis*– I should have an after-school job because I need to save for college.

Reason one–The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I need to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year! Also, I do not want to keep asking my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when I am at a college. Most of the colleges that I plan to attend are in other states, and it will be more difficult to ask my parents for these items. In addition, I want to start earning enough money to buy a car at the end of my senior year. I do not want my parents to buy the car because they need that money to pay for my tuition.

Annie's Strategy: *I stated my opinion, but I did not give any reasons to support it.*

After Revision: *Thesis*–I should have an after-school job because I need to save for college.

Reason one–The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I need to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year!

Reason two–Also, I do not want to keep asking my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when I am at a college.

Reason three–In addition, I want to start earning enough money to buy a car at the end of my senior year.

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Annie's Reflection: *I added three reasons to support my thesis statement. I wrote each reason as a topic sentence for new paragraphs that I will create for each.*

Revision Goal 2: Include details to support your reasons.

1. Highlight, in blue, any reasons you included to support your thesis statement. Highlight, in green, any facts or details that explain each reason.

2. Include at least two details to support each reason. Details can be facts, stories, examples, or experiences.
Example:

Before Revision: *Thesis*–I should have an after-school job because I need to save for college.

Reason one–The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I need to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year!

Reason two–Also, I do not want to keep asking my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when I am at a college.

Reason three–In addition, I want to start earning enough money to buy a car at the end of my senior year.

Annie's Strategy: *I have three supporting reasons for my opinion, but I need to add details to all three.*

After Revision: *Thesis*–I should have an after-school job because I need to save for college.

Reason one–The College that I want to attend is very expensive, so I want to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year! I need to earn money for other expenses like textbooks and computer supplies. There are unplanned expenses as well, like spending money to use in town with friends and last-minute school supplies for class projects.

Reason two–Also, I do not want to ask my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when I am at a college. Most of the colleges that I plan to attend are in other states, and it will be more difficult to ask them for these items. Plus, I want the freedom to purchase these items on my own and when I choose to do so.

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Reason three– In addition, I want to start earning enough money to buy a car at the end of my senior year. I do not want my parents to buy the car because they need that money to pay for my tuition. I know that I will need some help with this from them when repairs are needed, but I can pitch in a certain amount of money.

Annie's Reflection: *I added details to support each of my reasons.*

Organization

On a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 3 for organization.** Organization relates to your ability to present your ideas in a logical and ordered fashion.

Score Point 3
Mary, here are some things you can do to improve your organization.

Revision Goal 1: Create an effective introduction.

1. You should write your opinion statement at the end of your introduction. Look at your introduction and highlight your opinion statement in yellow. If you don't have one, write one now.

2. In the introduction, you should also give background information to help your readers understand the issue. Highlight, in blue, the background information you include. Add important background information. (HINT: Background information can be found in the prompt.)

3. Finally, you should grab your readers' attention at the beginning of your introduction. Underline the sentence you wrote to grab readers' attention. If you don't have one, add a question or an unusual or surprising statement to the beginning of your introduction.

Example:

Before Revision: I should have an after-school job because I need to save for college now. The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I need to start earning money now.

Oscar's Strategy: *I have a clear thesis statement, but it is at the beginning of my introduction. I need to move it to the end, and add a sentence to grab my readers' attention.*

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After Revision: Do you or your family have enough money for college? The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I need to start earning money now. The average tuition for a private college is well over twenty thousand dollars a year. My family and I do not have enough money to support this when I start to attend in two years. I should have an after-school job because I need to save money for college now.

Oscar's Reflection: *First, I added a question to grab my readers' attention with a question. Then, I added background information to help my reader understand the issue.*

Revision Goal 2: Give your essay effective supporting paragraphs and a conclusion.

1. Transitional words help show how your ideas are related, or connected. Highlight your transitions in orange. You should include transitions between paragraphs and between sentences.

2. Now, underline your conclusion. If you do not have a conclusion, add one now. Your conclusion may be a restatement of your opinion. It should leave readers with something to think about or give a call to action.

Example:

Before Revision: The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I want to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year! I need to earn money for other expenses like textbooks and computer supplies. There are unexpected expenses as well, like spending money to use in town with friends and last-minute school supplies for class projects.

I do not want to ask my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when I am at a college. Most of the colleges that I am planning to attend are in other states, and it will be more difficult to ask them for these items. Plus, I want to have the freedom to purchase these items on my own and when I choose to do so.

I want to start earning enough money to buy a car at the end of my senior year. I do not want my parents to buy the car because they need that money to pay for my tuition. I know that I will need some help with this from them when repairs are needed, but I can pitch-in a certain amount because I am the one driving the car. These are the reasons why I want to have an after-school job for college.

Oscar's Strategy: *I need more transitions so readers can follow my essay better. My conclusion has to be more creative as well.*

After Revision: First, the college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I want to start earning money now.

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The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year! I need to earn money for other expenses like textbooks and computer supplies. There are other expenses as well, like spending money to use in town with friends and last-minute school supplies for class projects.

In addition, I do not want to ask my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when I am at a college.

Most of the colleges that I am planning to attend are in other states, and it will be more difficult to ask them for these items. Plus, I want to have the freedom to purchase these items on my own and when I choose to do so.

Similarly, I want to start earning enough money to buy a car at the end of my senior year. I do not want my parents to buy the car, because they need that money to pay for my tuition. There will be times when I will need help with car repairs, but I want to help out with these when I am able to.

What this country has to consider is why going to college is so expensive in the first place! Colleges consider more than your academic record when you apply to them, but if you need to work twenty hours or more a week to earn enough money to go to college, where is the balance? For me, I need to find that balance for the good of my family and myself.

Oscar's Reflection: *I added transitions between paragraphs and sentences. My conclusion leads readers into a new direction without losing the focus of the essay's thesis statement.*

Language Use, Voice & Style

On a scale of one to six, your response to this assignment **was rated a 3 for language use, voice and style.** Language use relates to the decisions you make as a writer to create **"style"** in your writing.

Mary, try some of these ideas to help improve language and style in your writing.

Revision Goal 1: Use descriptive and persuasive words effectively.

1. Highlight, in green, the words or phrases that answer the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how. Then use your five senses, along with adjectives and adverbs, to describe your opinion statement better. Use the Word Bank to help you.

2. Underline the words or phrases you use too often and replace them with synonyms or more precise words. Use the Thesaurus to help you.

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3. You can also make your writing more effective by using strong, persuasive words (such as *you must, you need to, you should, right now, don't wait*). Use the Word Bank to help you.

Example:

Before Revision: In addition, I want to start earning enough money to buy a car at the end of my senior year. I do not want my parents to buy the car because they need that money to pay for my tuition.

Larry's Strategy: *I need to add precise words and sensory details. Persuasive words will also help readers focus on my opinion statement.*

After Revision: In addition, I want to start earning enough money to buy an economy car at the end of my senior year in high school. I do not want my parents to purchase the car because they need those finances to pay for my tuition.

Larry's Reflection: *I added the adjective "economy" and the prepositional phrase "in high school." I replaced the verb "buy" with "purchase" to add emphasis to the main point. Finally, I changed "that money" to "those finances" to focus the details in a better way.*

Revision Goal 2: Use well-structured and varied sentences.

1. Highlight short sentences in pink. Highlight long sentences in purple. Combine short sentences using conjunctions (and, or, but, for, so, yet) or add more details. Separate long sentences with more than one idea into two or more sentences.

2. Underline the first three words in each sentence. Do all of your sentences start the same way? Change the way you begin each sentence by adding more details to the beginning of sentences, such as *when* or *where* the action in the sentence took place.

Example:

Before Revision: I plan to purchase a car. When I have a car, I know that I will need some help from my parents with the repairs, and when I have to repair the car, I want to pitch in a certain amount of money but I will not have as much money as my parents.

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Larry's Strategy: *I have one short sentence and a long compound sentence. I need to make the first sentence longer or combine it with another. The compound sentence needs to be two separate sentences as well.*

After Revision: I plan to purchase a car when I am a senior in high school. When I have a car, I know that I will need help from my parents with the repairs. However, I want to pitch in a certain amount of money to help them as well.

Larry's Reflection: *I added the detail "when I am a senior in high school" to lengthen the first sentence. I separated and modified the second sentence into two separate ones.*

Mechanics & Conventions

Mary, the better the mechanics in your essay, the easier it will be for readers to enjoy and understand your writing!

Revision Goal 1: Eliminate errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and mechanics.

1. Read your writing. You may want to read out loud (to yourself) so you can hear many of your mistakes and correct them.

2. Correct any spelling errors using the spellchecker. Then, make your readers SMILE by doing the following:

- **Sentences**: Make sure each sentence has a complete meaning.

Example:

Before Revision: I should have an after-school job.

Marcy's Strategy: *This is a sentence but it lacks a complete thought. I need to add a phrase to complete the meaning.*

After Revision: I should have an after-school job because I need to save for college.

Marcy's Reflection: *I added the "because I need to save for college" to complete the meaning of the sentence.*

- **Marks:** Use **punctuation marks** correctly.

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Example:

Before Revision: The college that I want to attend is very expensive so I want to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year

Marcy's Strategy: *I need to put punctuation marks at the end of each sentence to help my readers understand my ideas.*

After Revision: The College that I want to attend is very expensive, so I want to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year!

Marcy's Reflection: *I added a comma after "expensive" because it is a compound sentence. I placed an exclamation point after "year" because it is intended to express a strong feeling about the tuition.*

- **Indents:** Indent each new paragraph.

Example:

Before Revision: The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I want to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year! I need to earn money for other expenses like textbooks and computer supplies. There are unplanned expenses as well, like spending money to use in town with friends and last-minute school supplies for class projects.

Marcy's Strategy: *I noticed that I did not indent the beginning of this paragraph. I need to indent each paragraph.*

After Revision: _____The college that I want to attend is very expensive, so I want to start earning money now. The tuition alone is twenty-five thousand dollars a year! I need to earn money for other expenses like textbooks and computer supplies. There are unplanned expenses as well, like spending money to use in town with friends and last-minute school supplies for class projects.

Marcy's Reflection: *I indented the beginning of the paragraph.*

- **Letters:** Start each sentence with a capital letter, and capitalize formal names, places, and the pronoun "I."

Example:

Before Revision: also, i do not want to ask my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when i am at a college.

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Most of the colleges, like treeline university, that i plan to attend are in other states, and it will be more difficult to ask them for these items. plus, i want the freedom to purchase these items on my own and when I choose to do so.

Marcy's Strategy: *I need to capitalize the beginning of my sentences and formal names, places, and the pronoun "I."*

After Revision: Also, I do not want to ask my parents for money to buy clothes and other accessories when I am at a college. Most of the colleges, like Treeline University that I plan to attend are in other states, and it will be more difficult to ask them for these items. Plus, I want the freedom to purchase these items on my own and when I choose to do so.

Marcy's Reflection: *I capitalized "Also" because it is the beginning of my first sentence. "Treeline University" and the pronoun "I" needed to be capitalized as well.*

- **Editor:** Click on MY Editor for more ways to improve your writing.

- Ask students what parts of the feedback they underlined—the parts that told the writer how to improve. For each domain, the last box of text contains revising suggestions to improve the work. Point out that while receiving a "75" or a "C" on a paper might tell them the grade, neither score tells them what to do about it. Rubric-based responses, on the other hand, tell you how you scored, what to do about, and even how you might go about making that improvement.

Summing Up

We make students independent by giving them the tools and the experience they need to become good evaluators of their own work. They cannot become good planners or revisers until they are good evaluators. Students who know the qualities of good writing are better able to draft and revise their work. They can address a writing task or prompt with the knowledge that they must write with focus, develop in detail, organize their work, write to the audience, and follow the rules or conventions of standard written English.

Learning to evaluate another writer's work is a needed step in learning to evaluate one's own work—and thus become a more proficient and independent writer.

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Focus and Meaning: The Reading *before* the Writing

Essential Questions:

1. *Why is Focus the most important part of good writing?*
2. *How do you read and break down a task and find its contexts - the who, the what, the why, and the how of it.*
3. *How do you find the controlling (central or main) idea of these tasks or prompts, so that you know how to create the controlling idea in the essays you write?*
4. *How do you use a rubric to evaluate essays for focus and decide which one is very effective, adequate or inadequate for focus?*

Objectives:

- To show why Focus is the most important part of good writing
- To show you how to read and break down a task and find its contexts - the who, the what, the why, and the how of it.
- To allow students to practice the following My Access! ® skills online:
    a) Logging on
    b) Selected a prompt/task to start or resume
    c) Using the Note pad tool to analyze a prompt/task for Focus.
    d) Saving a "draft"
    e) Using the Writer's Guide to access and complete an activity online.

Vocabulary:

- **Audience:** the reader(s) of an essay.
- **Context:** the who, what, where, when, why and how of a writing task: writer, audience, subject, purpose, and pattern.
- **Controlling Idea:** a controlling idea is the central or main idea of your entire writing. Often, the controlling idea makes the connection between the task and the texts or readings that go with it.
- **Purpose:** the reason for writing the essay.

Time: One Class Period or 40 minutes

Materials and Preparation:

Before Class:

- Log on to MY Access!® (www.gomyaccess.com) as a teacher.
- Click on Assignments for your group.
- Click on the Add Assignment button. Click Browse and located in the middle school folder→Year Round Schooling Prompt (*or a prompt of your choice*). Click to make available the prompt to the group/class.

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- Print out copies of The Focus Checklist, pg 14
- Print out copies of student activity "Community Action Club" pg 16
- Print out copies of student activity worksheet-"Focus and Meaning: Analyzing Tasks" pgs 17—20.
- Print out copies of student activity worksheet: "Use Rubrics: Scoring for Focus" (*This activity can be completed online and is located in section 2.8.1.*

Optional: Student notes: "One Topic, Many Controlling (central or main) Ideas"

MY Access!® Writer's Guide sections:

2.2 "What is Focus and Meaning?"
2.3 "The Reading Before the Writing: Analyzing the Task"
2.4 "Analyzing Tasks: What is the Controlling (Central or Main) Idea?"
2.5.1 Learning Activities: Analyzing Tasks
2.8.1 Learning Activities: How to tell a 6 from a 4 from a 2 when you score an essay.

Teacher Background information

Many problems we think of as writing problems are not really about *writing*—about generating and organizing text. Some are reading problems—what am I supposed to do here? Some are knowledge problems—I don't know anything about this. Some are thinking problems—my thinking on this isn't clear or complete. Some are attitude problems—I don't want to write this.

The most important reading any student does on a test is the reading and analyzing of the task. A student who does not have a good understanding of the task is doomed before he or she even begins to write.

The task or prompt is the lens through which the student must look at the world or, if it is a text-based task, at some literary or informational writing. If that lens is smudged or cloudy or warped, the eventual writing cannot be clear and focused. You will see that, in the Focus Checklist, the whole writing process is addressed, from reading and understanding tasks or prompts to evaluating and revising their work

The Focus Checklist is the student's guide to analyzing tasks. Students who can answer these questions well understand the purpose, form, and contexts of the task or prompt. A student who can answer these questions has solved the writer's first problem, getting started with an on-target response.

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Lesson (model)

1. Say, in the previous lesson you saw definitions for the qualities of effective writing. The first qualities are **focus** and **meaning.** If you think about yourself as a **reader** for a moment, you'll understand how these terms are used to describe writing.

You've probably had the experience of letting your mind wander while you are reading. After awhile, you realize that you've read the same page five or six times, but you still haven't paid attention to what you're reading --you lost ***focus.*** You looked at the words, but you didn't get the *meaning* of the ideas. **Focus** and **meaning** work in a similar way when you are writing. If you lose focus, you wander off the task and don't do what you are supposed to do. An essay with poor focus does not zero in on the purpose of the task and then accomplish all of it.

An essay can be poor in meaning if you don't understand the task, or if you don't understand the text or texts you are supposed to be writing about, or if you don't connect the task to the texts with a clear ***controlling*** or ***central idea*** or main idea.

2. Say, "Analyze" that's a word you see often in directions for tests and tasks for all subjects. What does it mean? Does it mean read the directions slowly? Does it mean read them ten times? Does it mean stare at them until you burn a hole through the paper with your eyes? How do you analyze? *(Allow time for students to response)*

If you've ever taken anything apart or broken it down into simpler parts then you've **analyzed.** Maybe you took apart the ball point pen or squirt gun to see how it was supposed to work. Maybe you took apart the cookie or dessert that came in layers so you could eat it one layer at a time (saving the best for last).

When you analyze a task or prompt, you take it apart to see how it's made, to see how many parts there are. You also need to know how it is supposed to what are the right contexts. The earlier part of this section has given you plenty of practice with this type of analysis.

Analyzing the task is the reading *before* the writing, and that reading is very important. We'll show you how to use key features of the task to prepare your response for a good score for ***Focus*** and ***Meaning."*** Writing a response that does a good job for **focus** and **meaning** greatly increases your chances to write well for all the other domains, as well. On the other hand, getting a poor start with **focus** and **meaning** will make it difficult for you to score well.

3. Hand out the prompt text "Community Action Club" and "The Focus Checklist." Explain to students that we will analyze the first task/prompt offline

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together. Have students fill in the description as you review each context with them.

4. Say, "Writer's role. What is your role as a writer? Who are you as the writer? Yourself? A student? An adult speaker?. What voice and tone would be appropriate for this role? "Ask students to read the prompt and box in the words that tell you the writer's role. Record your answer on the Focus checklist."

5. Subject or Topic:

Ask, "What exactly do you need to write about? This is the subject or topic of your essay. How many parts are there to this topic? What do you already know? What do you have to get from the text(s) I have to read? What are the key features of this topic? Read the prompt and box in the words that tell you the subject or topic. Record your answer on the Focus checklist

6. Audience:

Ask, "For whom am I writing? How old are they? Are they in authority (principal, senator, etc.)? What do they already know about this topic? How can I get their interest and attention? What voice and tone would be appropriate for to this audience? Read the prompt and box in the words that tell you the intended audience. Should you be knowledgeable—because you are giving information? Should you be entertaining—because you are telling a story? Should you be directive—because you are telling the reader what to do and how to do it?

7. Voice:

Voice is the personality that comes through from the whole writing. Voice includes more than emotion and attitude. It also includes authority. Should you be knowledgeable—because you are giving information? Should you be entertaining—because you are telling a story? Should you be directive—because you are telling the reader what to do and how to do it? We might describe different voices as being ***speculative*** (*suggesting or investigating*), ***tentative*** (*not really sure of himself or herself*), ***authoritative*** (*"This is the captain speaking*."), and even ***arrogant***, talking to you as if you don't know anything.

8. Tone:

Has anyone ever said to you "*Don't use that tone with me*!" If so, the person must have heard disrespect not in the words, but in the way the words were said. You know that you can say the words "School starts next week." in many different tones, depending on what your attitude is. Tone is the attitude that lies behind the words You can describe tone in writing by using the same words you'd use to describe moods or emotion*:* ***happy***, ***triumphant***, ***sly, humorous, angry, fearful***, and everything else.

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9. Purpose:

Ask, What are you supposed to accomplish with this writing? Is it to explain how to do something? Tell a story? Persuade someone to *do* something? Read the prompt and box in the words that tell you the purpose of this writing. Record your answer on the focus checklist.

10. Organizational Pattern:

Ask, What would be a good way to organize this writing? Are you giving a sequence of events? Making a case for your idea?" Telling a story? Tell students that they will be learning more about organizational patterns in a later lesson.

11. Controlling idea (or main or central idea):
Ask, what is the most important thing you have to say? Could you sum up the main idea of your writing in one sentence?

Prompt:

Background: Your community has a Community Action Club, and you are a member. Club members volunteer their time and talents to work on projects for the good of the community. However, the Club also needs money for materials for some needed projects. The Club wants to sponsor a dance at your school to raise money for these projects. School policy states only school clubs can sponsor dances in the building.

Your Task: As a Club member, write a letter to your school principal to persuade him or her that your Club should be allowed to sponsor a dance in school.

Say, writers who do not carefully analyze the task are not likely to do the job required by the task or prompt. They are also not likely to get good scores.

Elicit students' answers and write them on an overhead or a front board. Show how the evidence for each context is embedded in the prompt. ***Stress that it is the writer's first job to be a reader, to analyze the task.***

12. Say, "Do your answers look like this? "

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Writer's Role: member of the Community Action Club
Audience: school principal
Subject: fund-raising dance
Purpose: *to persuade principal to let Club hold dance*
Pattern (Form): a persuasive pattern of organization (probably opinion-reason)
Voice: directive (you're suggesting what should be done)
Tone: respectful (you're writing to the principal)
Controlling (central or main) Idea: You should allow a service club like the Community Action Club to sponsor a dance in the school building

- Tell students that asking the questions on the **Focus Checklist** will help them to zero in on the target. The Checklist will guide them to a controlling idea that will be on the mark, just what the task or prompt requires.

Practice

Explain to students that next, they will be practicing analyzing tasks for focus and also writing that all-important controlling idea. Tell students to go step by step through the **Focus Checklist** for each activity. They should underline the parts of the task that reveal the answers. Then they should fill in the headings after the task with the *contexts* or surroundings of the task. Finally, they should write a controlling idea for a response to the prompt. This analysis can be considered to be prewriting and even the beginning of drafting as students develop controlling ideas.

Explain, although they might be able to write a good controlling idea in one sentence, they are not limited to one sentence. It is more important to get the whole idea down on paper than it is to get the idea into one sentence.

Tell students that a prompt or task might ask for some information they do not have right now. However, they should still be able to write a **controlling (central or main) idea** that shows what kinds of information are required to complete the task. When you review Activity 2 and 3, you can point this out.

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Activity 1:
Your school is considering requiring all students to wear uniforms to school. Do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to require all students to wear uniforms? Why or why not?

Write an essay persuading your principal to accept your recommendation on whether or not school uniforms should be required.

Writer (role):
Audience:
Subject:
Purpose:
Pattern (form):
Voice and Tone:
Controlling Idea:

Activity 2:

The Situation: Your technology class is studying common threats to health and safety found in the home. Your job is to write a report for the class in which you explain three common household safety threats and what can be done to make risk from these threats as low as possible.

Your Task: Read the article "Hazards in Your Home" and choose three common threats to health and safety. For each, explain the nature of the threat, the injury or health problem that could result, and what can be done to avoid or prevent the problem.

Writer (role):
Audience:
Subject:
Purpose:
Pattern (form):
Voice and Tone:
Controlling Idea:

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Activity 3

The Situation: Your psychology class is studying emotions and their effects on behavior. You have been assigned to prepare a report on how to deal with an angry child.

Your Task: Read the text that follows and use relevant information from it to write an oral presentation about the problems of dealing with angry children. In your presentation suggest some effective techniques for responding to the behavior of an angry child.

Writer (role):
Audience:
Subject:
Purpose:
Pattern (form):
Voice and Tone:
Controlling Idea:

After students complete the activities, you can elicit responses and record them on a flipchart or a front board and compare them with these suggested responses.

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Activity 1

The Situation: Your school is considering requiring all students to wear uniforms to school. Do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to require all students to wear uniforms? Why or why not?

Your Task: Write an essay persuading your principal to accept your recommendation on whether or not school uniforms should be required.

Suggested Response

Writer (role): student in school
Audience: your principal
Subject: school uniforms—a good idea or a bad idea
Purpose: persuade the principal to accept your recommendation
Pattern (form): a persuasive pattern (opinion-reason)
Voice and Tone: directive and respectful—you're giving advice to the principal

Controlling Idea: I hope you will oppose the idea of school uniforms for students in our school. We have always prided ourselves on being individuals and on recognizing important cultural differences. Dressing us all alike--as if we were twin babies—goes against what our school stands for.

Activity 2

The Situation: Your technology class is studying common threats to health and safety found in the home. Your job is to write a report for the class in which you explain three common household safety threats and what can be done to make risk from these threats as low as possible.

Your Task: Read the article "Hazards in Your Home" and choose three common threats to health and safety. For each, explain the nature of the threat, the injury or health problem that could result, and what can be done to avoid or prevent the problem.

Suggested Response

Writer (role): technology student
Audience: technology class
Subject: home health hazards (3 of them) and how to avoid them
Purpose: explain or instruct
Pattern (form): an informational pattern (how-to)
Voice and Tone: knowledgeable - you are giving information to classmates
Controlling Idea: With a little understanding and careful planning, you can make your family safe from the home health hazards of _____, _____, and _____.

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Activity 3

The Situation: Your psychology class is studying emotions and their effects on behavior. You have been assigned to prepare a report on how to deal with an angry child.

Your Task: Read the text that follows and use relevant information from it to write an oral presentation about the problems of dealing with angry children. In your presentation suggest some effective techniques for responding to the behavior of an angry child.

Suggested Response

Writer (role): psychology student
Audience: psychology class
Subject: problems dealing with angry children; techniques for responding
Purpose: explain or instruct

Pattern (form): informational pattern (how-to)
Voice and Tone: knowledgeable—you are giving information to classmates
Controlling Idea: Children who have trouble controlling their anger create a number of problems for those who must take care of them. There are, however, some strategies you can use to deal with the behavior of an angry child.

Apply

Have students log on to MY Access!® www.gomyaccess.com Ask students to select the *Year Round Schooling* prompt (*or another prompt selected and assigned by the teacher*) by clicking directly on the text to select. Explain to students My Access! ® includes a set of tools to assist students throughout the writing process including prewriting, drafting and revising. Today they'll begin learning about one of these tools called the Note pad. Ask students to locate the Note pad icon on the toolbar above the textbox (writing area). Explain to students that by clicking on the icon a new window will open to display the notepad. Have students analyze the task for focus. Use the Note pad to create the focus checklist (writer's role, audience, subject, purpose, pattern, voice, tone and controlling (central or main) idea, and key in the each writing context.

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Re-teaching Strategies

Here is another lesson to use with students to help them to analyze tasks and attend to the features of the rubric. This comes right from the Writer's Guide. This activity can be done on paper on online (2.8.1 Learning Activities: How to tell a 6 from a 4 from a 2 when you score an essay)

Explain to students,

You will see a task and the opening paragraphs of three different responses to the task. For the trait of Meaning/Focus, one of these responses is headed for a "6." Another is headed for a "4." The remaining one is headed for a "1" on Meaning/Focus.

Read the prompt, read each opening paragraph, and assign the score you think the response is headed for. Score only the trait of Meaning/Focus. Click on the rubric for independent writing if you wish to review the descriptions for this trait. Give a reason for each score by taking language from the rubric that best describes the response.

If you do this activity on paper, elicit responses and reasons from students before reviewing with them the scores and reasons given below.

If you do this activity online, screens with these responses have textboxes that students can click on after giving their verdicts and reasoning. Each textbox gives the solution and justification for the score. Here is what students will find in the textbox for each activity.

The task:
We have all encountered bad situations in our lives that later turned out to lead to good things. Think of a time when a bad situation later had a good result for you. What bad situation were you in? How did it later have a good result for you? What did you learn from the experience?

Write an essay about a bad situation that later turned out to have a good result for you, and tell what you learned from the experience.

Opening Paragraph 1: *Bad things happen to people all the time, even if they're good people. Some friends of mine who have never done anything bad themselves have had some real bad things happen to them, like car crashes and getting their apartment ripped off. And they never did anything to deserve it.*

Meaning/Focus score: _____

Reason for this score: _____

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Opening Paragraph 2: *I've just about given up trying to predict how a conversation with one of my parents is going to turn out. If I think things are going well, a bomb is sure to explode soon. If I think they're going to reach for the handcuffs as soon as I ask for permission to go somewhere, my father will probably make a grunt that means "okay" without even looking up from his newspaper. There are other kinds of surprises, too. Good things can turn bad, and bad things can turn good. Last Friday I got into a wicked argument with Mom. Finally I screamed at her, "You're ruining my life! I hope you're enjoying it!" Instead of yelling back, she burst into tears. Then we started talking. Two hours later I knew more about my mother as a person than I have been able to figure out these past 14 years.*

Meaning/Focus score: _____

Reason for this score: _____

Opening Paragraph 3: *When I was six years old, a really bad thing happened to me. I was climbing a tree in the park and I got stuck about halfway up. I twisted and turned, but I couldn't get my foot out from where it was stuck. As I stood there crying and holding on to the tree, a woman passed by and said she would call for help. The fire rescue workers came in a little while and put a huge ladder up against the tree.*
I was afraid to let go of the tree, but I had to get down, so I did. But the day wasn't all bad. Instead of grounding me for six months, my parents gave me a "welcome home" party.

Meaning/Focus score: _____

Reason for this score: _____

If you do this activity on paper, elicit responses and reasons from students before reviewing with them the scores and reasons given below.

If you do this activity online, screens with these responses have textboxes that students can click on after giving their verdicts and reasoning. Each textbox gives the solution and justification for the score. Here is what students will find in the textbox for each activity.

Opening Paragraph 1:
Meaning/Focus score: 1
Reason for this score: It doesn't look like this essay is ever going to deal with the topic, a bad thing (that happened to the writer) that had a good result.

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Opening Paragraph 2:
Meaning/Focus score: 6
Reason for this score: This writer is going to complete all parts of the task. We already know, in general, what the bad thing was (the argument and screaming and crying), and we know that the argument will cause a good thing to happen: the writer will "discover" that his or her mother is a person.

Opening Paragraph 3:
Meaning/Focus score: 4
Reason for this score: This writer is probably going to spend too much time on the bad thing and not enough on the good thing, but it looks as if both events will be dealt with in the essay.

Summing Up:

Focus is the most important element of good responses to writing tasks or prompts. Writing with good focus will zero in on the task and do all parts of it. Answering the questions in the Focus Checklist will guide students to a solid and comprehensive controlling idea, a crucial step in planning and writing an effective response.

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The Importance of Organization

Essential Questions:

1. *Why is organization a decision to make at the start of a task?*
2. *How do you choose an organizing pattern to suit the purpose of the task?*
3. *What are the five types of organizing patterns?*
4. *How can you use transitions to unify your essay?*

Objectives:

- To show why organization is a decision to make at the start of the task.
- To show how to choose an organizing pattern to suit the purpose of the task.
- To show how to write in five different patterns.
- To show how to write transitions.
- To enable student so practice the following skills online:
  - Logging on
  - Resuming a previously started prompt/task.
  - Using the following online prewriting tools:
    1. Writer's Note pad
    2. Word Bank
    3. Graphic Organizers (K-W-L, Venn Diagram, Cluster Map)
  - Saving as a draft
  - Accessing the Writer's Guide

Vocabulary Words:

- **Structure:** the structure of writing is its shape or organizing pattern, such as how-to, narrative, or opinion-reason.
- **Transition:** a writing technique that links one part (sentences, paragraphs, ideas) to another or others.
- **Unify:** bring together and make seem as one thing.
- **Preview:** a transition in the introduction that lists the ideas to come as proofs, reasons, steps, or other supporting details.
- **Bridge:** a link between paragraphs or pattern parts.
- **Review:** a transition in the conclusion that sums up the ideas given as proofs, reasons, steps, or other supporting details.

Time: 2 -3 days for the entire lesson

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Materials and Preparation:

Before class:

- Make available "Year Round School" (*or a prompt of your choice*) prompt
- Print copies of the following writing samples (pg 29---):
  - "Tropical Fish"
  - "Just Say-NO?"
  - "I Wonder What's Downstream?"
  - "Fuel for Your Body"
  - "All That Glitters"
- Print copies of student activity worksheet "Patterns of Organization"
- Print copies of student activity worksheet " Writing the Bridge

MY Access!® Writer's Guide sections:

3.1 Section Preview: Organization
3.2 What is Effective Organization?
3.3 Guidelines for Effective Organization
3.4 Organizing Pattern or Structure

Teacher Background Information

Students who don't know the "shape" or organization of a sonnet can't write one. Students who don't know the "shape" of an editorial or story or recipe can't organize one effectively. However, if they do know the shapes—the parts and how they are connected—they can instantly organize almost anything they have to write.

A key point is this: **When you select a pattern for the writing, you have already organized it**. If you select opinion-reason pattern for that editorial, you will have decided that your opinion, backed up by reasons, will be followed by a recommendation—what you want the reader to do. Just as a meal is organized before it is prepared and a trip is organized before it is taken, writing can be organized before it is completed, in the planning stages.

1. Say, You've practiced analyzing a task for its purpose, audience, and other contexts. You've practiced analyzing a text for its structure and purpose. You've practiced writing controlling ideas and developing your ideas with different methods.

2. The next trait on the rubric is **Organization**. Effective writing has a **structure** or **pattern**. It has a beginning, middle, and an end. It holds together. It is **unified.** It includes **transitions** --words, phrases, and longer elements that help to connect one idea to another and keep the reader on track.

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3. Using a familiar organizing pattern is like using a cafeteria tray that has separate compartments for different foods. It's easy to keep things where they belong. Using a Pattern is like sorting your clothes into dresser drawers instead of throwing them all into a bag. Organizing with a familiar pattern also makes the reader's work easier.

4. The reader can get a sense of what is to come and can actually read faster and better when the writing is organized in a familiar pattern.

5. When you select a pattern for the writing, you have already organized it. If you select opinion-reason for that editorial, you will have decided that your opinion, backed up by reasons, will be followed by a recommendation—what you want the reader to do.

Have students look at an overhead or photocopy of the passage-Tropical Fish as you read the passage out loud. Tell students this example is one of the most common types of writing called "informational writing. Explain that informational passages are "put together" or organized in different ways to give information for different purposes such as explaining how to do something, to give directions, provide information about a topic, etc. The structure gives the reader a number of details about a topic. Point out that most of the writing in their textbooks is organized this way. Let's call this structure the topic-aspect pattern.

Ask students, Can you state the main or controlling idea? Does the writing make sense? Point out that when writing is logically organized the ideas are easy to follow.

Emphasize to students the particular qualities of the introductions and conclusions of the different patterns.

Say, You can see from the analysis notes in the margin that the **introduction** of a topic aspect pattern introduces the topic, The **body** provides additional aspects of the topic. The **conclusion** applies this information**. The controlling idea is in boldface.**

6. Hand out to students additional samples of organizational patterns.

7. Explain, A true story or **personal account** is not structured the same way as a **how-to** or **topic aspect** because the purpose is different. While the recipe's purpose is to tell you what to do, the true story's purpose is to tell you what happened. The true story or personal account will be structured as a **narrative pattern**, a sequence of events that already took place. Do not confuse the personal account or true story with a literary or imaginative short story. As you'll see later in this section, literary short stories have a similar pattern but a different purpose.

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8. Have students look at the photocopy or overhead of "*I Wonder What's Downstream?*" as you read out loud.

9. Say, Here is a brief example of Jason's personal account of an experience he shared with his friend Billy. Ask students to compare the introduction, body and conclusion of topic-aspect writing and a personal narrative. Record their responses on the front board or overhead.

10. Hand out photocopies of **Just *Say No***. One of the most common forms of persuasive writing is the opinion piece or editorial, often organized in the opinion-reason pattern like the "*Just Say No to Friends*?"

11. Hand out ***Fuel for your Body*.**
Say, Another common persuasive text is used to draw conclusions, make an analysis, do an evaluation, or otherwise prove a point. The thesis-proof pattern sounds like it belongs in a courtroom, and you use it when you need to "make a case" for your ideas.

12. Emphasis for students that the "bottom line" of the thesis-proof pattern, because it is a persuasive pattern, is directive rather than informational. Again, ask students to compare the introduction, body and conclusion of a persuasive writing and an informative writing. Tell students that it is important to distinguish between informational and persuasive texts. A **persuasive text** such as a newspaper editorial or critical analysis will also have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. However, each part of a well-written persuasive piece will be aimed at convincing the reader. Record their responses on the front board or overhead.

13. Explain to students,
This part of the lesson could be 2000 pages long - if we tried to do a very thorough job of teaching you to read and interpret literature of all types. The most we can do here is show you some examples of common structures in literature and point out some of the special language techniques you will come across.

Hand out photocopy of **All that Glitters**. Explain that this is a brief version of a familiar story

Say, Earlier you read a personal account or true narrative. The parts of the narrative included background, conflict, climax, and resolution. Fictional or imaginative narratives—short stories and novels—have the same parts.
Notice that the fictional narrative does show you the complete controlling idea until the climax or resolution of the story.

Ask students to summarize the differences between the narrative, informational and persuasive organizational patterns. Create a chart that looks like the one below:

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Purpose		Organizing Pattern
Informational		
give information about a topic	topic-aspect	Topic - Aspect 1 - Aspect 2 - Application
	how-to	- Why you should know this - List of ingredients - List of steps - Special advise
tell what happened	true narrative	- Background - Conflict - Climax - Resolution
Critical		
	opinion-reason	Opinion
persuade, recommend an action		- Reason 1 - Reason 2 - Recommendation
	Thesis-proof	- Thesis or point to prove - Evidence to prove the thesis - Significance or "so what" about the thesis or point proven
Literary		
Teach and/or entertain	Fictional narrative	- Background - Conflict - Climax - Resolution

Lesson:

Explain to students that they are going to learn three strategies for effectively organizing their writing. Have student write these in their notebook or journal.

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1. **You should decide how to organize the writing *before you write it.***
2. **Your decision about organizing pattern should be based *on the purpose of the writing***
3. **You should plan the beginning and middle *after you plan the end***

Say, Let's take these rules one at a time.

Even if you don't play golf, you must have seen it played on television. The golfer chooses the club before the shot, based on the purpose of the shot, and based on the end—where the ball is supposed to end up.

You should decide how to organize the writing *before you write it.*

Practice:

Tell students that they will have a chance to practice analyzing tasks to determine the purpose and the organizing patterns of the writing. Hand out Organizing Activity worksheet. Now have students read and analyze each prompt to determine the purpose of the writing. Tell students once they identify the purpose, they should decide which of the three organizing patterns they might use to organize a written response to the prompt. Match up purposes and patterns with the requirements of each prompt or task. Here are the purposes and outlines of the patterns.

Prompt 1: Your school budget has to be cut by $100,000. Write a letter to the principal recommending what, in your view, should be cut from the budget.

Purpose: _____

Pattern you would use: _____

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Prompt 2: If you could improve your skill or ability at three sports or recreational activities, what would they be?

Purpose: _____

Pattern you would use: _____

Prompt 3: You've probably heard the expression, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." In other words, a real friend is there to help when the person really needs the help. Tell about a time when you were a real friend to someone in need.

Purpose: _____

Pattern you would use: _____

Explain to students . . .

Prompt 1 requires you to persuade someone, so you would choose opinion-reason—before you started writing.

Prompt 2 requires you to tell about a subject, so you would choose the informational pattern, topic-aspect, before you started writing.

Prompt 3 asks you to tell a story, a true one in this case, so you would choose the narrative pattern, before you started writing.

As you review the prompts and responses, make clear to students the most important rule for organization: **Your decision about organizing pattern should be based *on the purpose of the writing*.**

Prompt 1 has a persuasive purpose, to convince the principal, so a persuasive pattern is selected. **Prompt 2**, which calls only for information and not argument, can be organized with an informational pattern. For **Prompt 3**, the narrative pattern is chosen because the prompt requires a story to be told.

Remind them of another key point:

You should plan the beginning and middle *after you plan the end*.

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Say, This rule might not look right to you. How can you plan the end first—before you write the beginning and the middle? Wait a minute.

The rule doesn't say to *write* the end first; the rule says to *plan* the end first. This means you only need to figure out where your writing is going to go before you get started.

Imagine yourself a painter. You have been paid to paint a picture on a row of building. How might you start? Before you start, you might make a pencil sketch of the scene before reaching for a paintbrush. The sketch helps you, the artist see what will be included. There might be seven buildings in the row, but as an artist you might want only three of them in the painting.

Making a pencil sketch allows you, as an artist, to sketch out the whole painting in order to know—***before*** starting to paint—what the limits of the painting will be.

Using an organizing pattern allows you, as a writer, to sketch out the whole ***writing before*** you write the individual paragraphs.

Say, How would this work with one of our prompts? Let's look at the persuasive prompt requiring a recommendation for what to cut from the school budget. The outline below is written in the opinion-reason pattern. One sentence is written for each pattern part so you can see how ideas connect. "

Prompt 1 - opinion-reason pattern

Opinion: We should cut the budget without losing programs for students.
Reason 1: We don't have any "frills" or unnecessary programs.
Reason 2: Saving money shouldn't eliminate teachers, either.
Recommendation: Close the small building where kindergarten is taught and move those classes to the elementary school .

The writer has to know the bottom line—what he or she is going to recommend—*before* the earlier parts can be planned.

Rule 3: Pattern Suits the Purpose

Tell students that when you are writing in response to a prompt or task or question, do your analysis and discover the purpose of your writing. Then you can choose a pattern that will get the job done. Here are the patterns we have been using, with a typical purpose and example for each.

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Topic-aspect: tell about a subject (what I learned on the field trip)
How-to: tell how to do something (how to raise your math grade)
Opinion-reason: tell what should be done (stop smoking now!)
Thesis-proof: tell the importance or significance of something (some diets are dangerous)
Narrative: tell what happened (our bus broke down on the expressway)

Apply

Say, Now, it's your turn. Complete the **topic-sentence outline** in response to the prompt that we are working on.

PROMPT:

Your school is considering a move to a year-round school schedule. The year-round schedule would have students attend school year-round with several three-week breaks as compared to the current school year calendar which begins in the fall and ends in the spring. Do you feel that a year-round schedule is more or less beneficial to students than the current school calendar? Write a letter to your principal persuading him or her to accept your position on a move to a year-round schedule.

Opinion-reason

Opinion: My feeling about year-around school is...
(your view)

Reason 1:
(because)

Reason 2:
(more because)

Reason 3:
(and more)

Recommendation:
(so, do this)

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Lesson:

Structure Words for Transition

You could make a shopping list or set of directions without using numbers, but the numbers would be helpful guides for the list's user. When you write, you can use helpful words that serve as guides to the reader. These signal words show relationships, and they can be used in any place in the essay. When you write, you can use **Transitional words** that will help to guide the reader. These words help connect one idea to another and act as signs and can show relationships. They can be used in any place in the essay. Here is a chart of such words and the relationships. Here is a chart of such words and the relationships they show they show.

Time or Order:	first, second, next, last, finally, earlier, later, after, until, then, from now on, up until now, primary, number one
Place:	above, below, beyond, within, close, farther on, inside, outside, wherever, behind, in front of
Addition:	and, also, in addition, besides, moreover, too, as well, not only, but also
Reversal:	but, however, although, yet, still, on the other hand, even so, despite, nonetheless, regardless
Cause-Effect:	because, since, as a result, owing to, as an effect, if, in a case where, under the condition that
Comparison:	similarly, like, as, more, less, just like, larger, smaller, more or less important (or significant or expensive or anything else)
Choice:	or, either, either-or, alternatively,

Think of these words as pointers or signals of where your writing is going to go. A good writer makes it easy for the reader to follow. Here is a short paragraph based on one of the writing activities in this chapter. The signal words are in italics.

Smoking is a leading cause of health problems. *Besides causing* heart diseases of various kinds, smoking *also* is the *number one cause* of lung cancer and other types of cancers. Many smokers believe that they can quit *at any time: however,* quitting in not so easy. *Even if* a smoker does quit, the bad effects of years of smoking don't just disappear overnight.

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Most of the time, we use these words without even thinking of them. When we write, we should think about important places such as beginnings, beginnings of paragraphs, and endings. Next, you will see how signal words can help you write transitional devices in such key places.

Choosing a pattern and using structure words make great start on organizing your writing, but there is still more that you can do to unify your paper and help the reader go smoothly from one idea to the next:

- you can use a *preview* in your first paragraph or pattern part to give a snapshot of what is to come
- you can use a *bridge* to link one paragraph or pattern part to another
- you can use a *review* at the beginning of your last paragraph or pattern part

The list above says "paragraph or pattern part" because, in longer writings, a reason, for example, may require two or three paragraphs to develop. In a shorter writing, a reason might be developed in a single paragraph.

Remember that it is the pattern part that is the unit *of thought*. The reason still serves the purpose of a reason, whether it takes one or twenty paragraphs to develop it.

Transitions: Writing a bridge

Say, "Think of what an actual bridge does: It's a structure that connects two sides or banks of a gap caused by water or some other landform. In writing, a bridge connects two ideas in different paragraphs. The bridge is written by referring to both ideas in the same paragraph. Here is an easy example from an essay on the dangers of smoking.

Let's say the thesis states that smoking can cause a variety of health problems. Proof 1 is about heart disease. Proof 2 is about cancer. A bridge (shown in italics) might work like this:

Proof 1:	Smoking is a major cause of heart disease. (The proof would continue to give evidence about heart diseases.)
Proof 2:	*Not only does smoking cause heart disease, but it is also a leading cause of many types of cancer.* (Now this proof would continue to give evidence about cancers caused by smoking.)

A bridge sentence usually comes at the end of the first paragraph or the beginning of the second paragraph being linked. In very long writings, the bridge might be an entire paragraph by itself.

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Practice:

Now, it's your turn. You can practice writing a bridge with the topic-sentence outline below. It is an outline of one person's response to the prompt. Write a bridge that would connect reason 1 to reason 2.

Opinion: My feeling about year-around school is that it is a terrible idea.
(your view)

Reason 1: Young people couldn't stand to go to school during the hot summer months.
(because)

Bridge: _____

_____

_____

Reason 2: Summer is the only time most kids can get jobs.
(more because)

Recommendation: Leave the school calendar just the way it is.
(so, do this)

Remind students that the bridge must have a reference back to the earlier idea and a reference forward to the next idea, as in this example:

Reason 1: Young people couldn't stand to go to school during the hot summer months that should be their vacation.
(because)

Bridge: With year-round school, students would have to go without vacation and without employment. Or not only would students miss their vacations; they would also miss their main opportunities for employment.

Reason 2: Summer is the only time most kids can get jobs.
(more because)

Remind students that this kind of planning for organization and unity can be done early in the process of writing.

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Summing up:

Organization refers to how well your writing shows structure and unity, including transitional elements. Here are some ideas about effective organization.

When you select a pattern for the writing, you have already organized it.

- You should decide how to organize the writing *before you write it.*
- Your decision about organizing pattern should be based *on the purpose of the writing.*
- You should plan the beginning and middle *after you plan the end.*

Understanding **structure** is one of the most important keys to good reading *and* good writing. When they must respond to text-based tasks or prompts, recognizing structure and organization will help them to understand the writer's purpose.

Texts are "put together" or organized in different ways to give you information for different purposes. Although it is true that almost any kind of text has **an introduction, a body, and a conclusion,** there are different kinds of introductions, bodies, and conclusions for different purposes.

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Content and Development-Building Detail into Your Essay

Essential Questions:

1. *Why is developing ideas in detail so important?*
2. *What are the different methods to develop your ideas in detail?*
3. *What does effective, adequate, and inadequate development in writing look like?*

Objectives:

- To show why developing ideas in detail is important.
- To show how to develop your ideas in detail with 7 different methods.
- To show what makes effective, adequate, and inadequate development in writing.
- To enable students to practice the following skills online:
    1. Logging on
    2. Using prewriting tools
        a) Graphic organizers-Venn Diagram
        b) K-W-L
        c) Cluster Map
    3. Drafting their response online
    4. Using MY Tutor tool
    5. Submitting an essay for scoring
    6. Interpreting and understanding reports
    7. Setting goals and identifying revision strategies

Vocabulary:

- **Content**: the relevant detail you choose to include in your essay.
- **Relevant Detail:** descriptions, stories, comparisons, and characteristics related to the topic of the essay.

Time: Two class periods or 90 minutes

Materials and Preparation:

- Print and hand out copies of student notes: "Time Capsule Prompt and sample essay"
- Print and hand out copies of "Methods of Development" Chart- pg 61
- Print and hand out copies of student activity worksheet- "Developing Ideas with Different Methods"-pg 62-69
- Year Round Schooling Prompt

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Writer's Guide

4.1 Section Preview: Content & Development
4.2 Building Detail Into Your Essay
4.3 Methods of Development

Teacher Background information

Most student writings could be improved significantly if students knew how to develop ideas in detail. They often tend to just state it once and move on, or to repeat the same idea a few times, almost word for word. The My Access! ® Writer's Guide offers not just advice, but also developmental activities for students to learn methods of development—a variety of techniques to develop ideas in detail.

Lesson

Say, I'm just a little short . . . Okay - you've read a prompt or task and analyzed it. You've found your role as a writer, your audience, your purpose for writing, and the organizing pattern you want to use. You've even done an outline by writing one sentence for each part of the organizing pattern.

The only problem is that you're a little short of the length requirement for a response. You've written about 100 words, but you need 350-600 words. What are you going to do? How did this happen to me?

Model

Say, Let's back up for a minute. Let's say you were preparing a response to this prompt:

> Your school is preparing a time capsule. The capsule will contain items that represent life at our school today. One hundred years from now, the capsule will be opened and the students of the future will look at the items to see what school was like "way back then." You have been asked to recommend an item to be included in the time capsule. What item would you recommend?
>
> Write an essay persuading the time capsule selection committee to include the item you recommend.

When you analyzed the prompt you came up with these contexts for the writing:

Writer: myself, as a student in my school
Audience: time capsule selection committee

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Subject: what to bury that represents school life today
Purpose: persuade them to accept my recommendation
Voice/Tone: directive
Pattern: opinion-reason

Your outline of topic sentences or main ideas looks like this:

Opinion: *I think we should bury a set of three pictures: one of our old building, one of our new building, and one of the plaque with our school mission statement on it.*

Reason 1: The set of photos would show that some things change.
Reason 2: It would also show that some things don't change.
Recommendation: I recommend that we include the photo set in the time capsule to show students of the future that they can be in a different building but still be in the same school.

Say, You have done a good job, so far. It looks as if you already found and organized your arguments. Where will you get the other 250-500 words? Will you continue to repeat them until you hit 450 words?

No, you're not going to repeat the arguments. You are going to develop them in detail. Each of the ideas in your outline will be developed into a block of text of 100 words or more. You might repeat an idea for emphasis, but not just to boost the word count."

Let's review what the rubric has to say about developing ideas in detail:

Development/Content: Effective writing develops ideas fully and artfully, using extensive specific, accurate, relevant details. If there is a text or texts, there is a wide variety of details from the text(s) to support ideas. Point out some key words:

Relevant: If you develop an idea with **relevant** detail, you will be using detail that is related to the topic, and not just throwing in random facts or other details.

Specific: Detail that are **specific** are small and easy to picture. "The door" is not specific. "The door, twisted off its hinges, was so chipped and battered that showed six different layers of paint," is specific.

So, the other 250-500 words are going to come from developing your general statements with

- specific (not vague or general)
- accurate (not false, misleading, or uncertain)
- relevant (not just randomly chosen) details.

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The details could be:

- **Facts:** the average rainfall is 12.3 inches per year in that location.
- **Examples:** Hawaii is an example of an island state.
- **Reasons**: Since suspects A and B could not have committed the crime, the only other suspect, suspect "C," must have done it.
- **Anecdotes:** I was walking down the street, kicking a stone along in front of me when I had the idea for the "wireless" fence to keep dogs on the owner's property.
- **Illustrations:** How quickly does this bacteria grow? Suppose you put a penny on one square of a checkerboard. After two seconds, put two pennies on the next square. After two more, put 4 pennies on the third square. There are 64 squares on a checkerboard. In a little over two minutes, you'd have more than 9 quintillion pennies—just on the last square. That's how fast it grows.

Say, These details are the content of your paper. This characteristic has two names, "development" and "content," because the content can't just be dumped onto the paper like gravel from a truck.

The content must be developed by various methods—methods of development.

Let's take a look at one method of development-comparing and contrasting. Comparing and contrasting develops ideas by showing similarities, differences, or both.

Comparing and Contrasting

Let's come back to the paper you were writing. Your first and main idea about the time capsule was this:

Opinion: *I think we should bury a set of three pictures: one of our old building, one of our new building, and one of the plaque with our school mission statement on it.*

Now we're going to add detail to that general idea with the method of development, comparing and contrasting. Here is the idea developed into full paragraphs.

I think we should bury in the time capsule a set of three pictures: one of our old building, one of our new building, and one of the plaque with our school mission statement on it.

The picture of the old school would be one taken from the street in front of the building. That picture would show cracked windows, chipped red brick, discolored plaster, peeling white paint, and sad

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bushes that look more like tumbleweed than landscaping. It would also show a cracked sidewalk, with grass growing in the cracks, leading up to doors so badly rusted that you can't read what it says on them.

The picture of the new building would also be taken from out in front, but it would show a very different scene. This picture would show a perfect front of clean gray stone with tall shining windows as big as doors. This picture would show the beautiful curve of the two-story entry hall topped by a dark green roof. It would show a trimmed green lawn landscaped with trees, bushes and flowers. It would show a glistening blacktop driveway leading to a traffic circle, and then a concrete walkway forty feet wide leading to the eight metal and glass entry doors.

The third picture, the picture of our mission statement, would show just words. It would show in the school colors, black words on a gold background, that our school includes students, teachers, counselors, nurses, administrators, custodians, secretaries, cafeteria workers, parents, board members, and members of the community. This picture would show no building.

Explain:

The passage you just saw shows mostly differences. Notice that the old school is contrasted with the new one, and that the mission statement is contrasted with both pictures of buildings.

The third picture is about the people who make up the school.
Most of the details included in the passage are facts or descriptions, but it is the way they are organized or developed that makes the reader see the differences.

Now the writing is about 250 words long. With this kind of detail, length isn't going to be a problem, is it? You can see from this passage that main ideas *tell*, but details *show*. Think of the main ideas in the opinion-reason outline as cartoons or outline drawings. The details add color, shade, depth, and all the other elements that make pictures interesting and effective.

Ask, What would this essay receive for "content" and development? Allow time for students to use the rubric to rate the response and give reasons to support the score.

Explain that this example would score a "6" on the rubric for development/content because it writing develops ideas fully and artfully, using extensive specific, accurate, relevant details.

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Practice:

Say, Let's return to the topic-sentence outline you wrote earlier as you were preparing a response to the prompt about year-round schooling. Select one of your reasons to develop with the method of comparing and contrasting.

We will use the Venn Diagram in MY Access!® to map out similarities, differences, and things in common between the current school calendar and year-round schooling. Since you are probably more interested in differences than in similarities for this particular writing, try to think of at least three important differences that support your reason. Then write a few paragraphs to develop one of your reasons by comparing and contrasting."

When you review the writings with students, point out that the details that come out through the method of development are what make up the content of the paper. A student who has identified two or three differences use will have no trouble writing a paragraph or two to develop the reason.

You might also take one completed student writing and use a Venn Diagram to map out the differences in the paragraphs, just to show another use for the device.

Establishing an Order

Before you try another method to develop a reason for the year-round school prompt, try this activity to practice the method of development, establishing an order.

The Situation: A new student is transferring to your school. Because you have the same schedules of classes, you have been assigned to spend the first day with this newcomer as a kind of guide to your school.

Your Task: In your "orientation day," explain to new person the four or five most important things to know about attending your school. Write this as if you were talking to the new student.
Remember the importance of using specific details.

Pre - write by listing important things to know. Then arrange the list in some order that will be effective. Draft by writing your "speech" or conversation with the new student.

Briefly review these writings with students before they go on to use the method to develop a reason from their topic-sentence outlines about year-round schooling.

Apply: Year-Round Schooling

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Say, Now you'll practice using establishing an order to develop one of your reasons from your topic-sentence outline in response to the prompt about year-round school.

Begin by selecting a reason to develop. List four or five ideas that support that reason. Then, arrange the list in an order that you think will be effective. For example, you might save the most important item on your list for last. Then write a few paragraphs to develop your reason by establishing an order.

When you review these writings with students, ask them to tell you what order of arrangement they chose—order of importance, size order, time order, etc. Point out that there is often no single best way to develop or organize ideas.

Apply: Year-Round Schooling

Say,

Cause and Effect

Before you try another method to develop a reason for the year-round school prompt, try this activity to practice the method of development, using cause and effect.

The Situation: A college and career survey question has asked you to predict what your life will be like 10 years from now. Where will you be and what will you be doing? What events (causes) during the next 10 years will have led to this result?

Your Task: Project 10 years into the future and show where you will be and what you will be doing (try to do this with a job or career you have in mind). Explain how at least three causes resulted in your relative success (or lack of success).Remember the importance of using specific details.

Pre-write by picking a job or career and imagining what you, in that position, would be doing ten years from now. Jot down causes that would lead to great success and causes that would lead to less success or even failure. Pick a likely spot along that range from great success to great failure and select three causes that would be likely causes for such an effect.

Draft by writing a paragraph that shows how your position (ten years from now) can be traced back to three main causes.

Briefly review these writings with students before they go on to use the method to develop a reason from their topic-sentence outlines about year-round schooling.

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Say, Now you'll practice using cause and effect to develop one of your reasons from your topic-sentence outline in response to the prompt about year-round school.

Begin by selecting a reason to develop. Using that reason, show how the change to year-round schooling would be a cause of a number of good or bad—depending on your reason—effects. After you jot down thee or four effects, write a few paragraphs to develop your reason by using cause and effect.

When you review these writings with students, ask them to identify the link between the cause and the effects they predict. Point out that the more explicit they can make the connection, the stronger the argument will be.

Summing Up:

Effective writing develops ideas fully and artfully, using extensive specific, accurate, relevant details. If there is a text or texts, there is a wide variety of details from the text(s) to support ideas. These details are the content of your paper. This characteristic has two names, "development" and "content," because the content can't just be dumped onto the paper like gravel from a truck. The content must be developed by various methods—methods of development. These include:

- comparing and contrasting
- making an order or series
- defining by key features
- giving examples
- using cause and effect
- illustrating with a story
- classifying and explaining characteristics

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What are Language Use, Voice and Style?

Essential Questions:

1. *Why is it important to write to your intended audience?*
2. *How do you control your written voice with word choice and sentence variety*
3. *How do you choose the right words to create the effect you want?*

Objectives:

- to show you *why* it is important to write to your intended audience
- to show you *how* to control your written voice with word choice and sentence variety
- to show you *how* to choose the right words to create the effect you want
- to show you *how* to avoid fragments and run-on sentences and still write varied sentences

Vocabulary:

- **Audience** is the reader(s) of your essay.
- **Connotations** are the associations and reactions people have toward a word.
- **Imagery** is a set of mental pictures or images that you include in your essay. Imagery is gained through description.
- **Style** is determined by the decisions you make as a writer, including word choice and sentence structure. *Style = Tone + Voice.*
- **Tone** is the manner of expression that comes through from your writing.
- **Voice** is the personality that comes through from your writing.
- **Word Choice** affects tone, attitude, and imagery (what the reader pictures).

Time: One Class Period or 40 minutes

Preparation and Materials:

Print out copies of student worksheet "Write Your Own Progress Report"
Sample student essay of your choice

Writer's Guide Sections:

5.2 What are Language Use, Voice and Style?
5.3 Writing for Audience
5.4 Word Choice
5.5 Sentence Variety
5.6 Sentence

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Teacher Background information

Voice, tone, and style are elements of writing that often separate the good from the best. The best writings are not only on the mark for focus, organization, and development; they are also on target for the intended audience. Although these elements are more difficult to define and control, careful attention to role as writer and audience can help students to choose words carefully and appropriately.

Lesson (model):

1. Provide copies of the following script: *After English Class*

> **Pablo:** *You don't look too happy.*
> **Deke:** *I'm not. I thought this was a great paper and the teacher didn't.*
> **Pablo:** *What was the problem?*
> **Deke:** *Nothing. There isn't one mistake on the paper. He didn't find a single mistake.*
> **Pablo:** *Did you do what you were supposed to do, agree or disagree with the idea of school uniforms?*
> **Deke:** *Yes, and I wrote to the principal, like I was supposed to. It's three pages long, so it's long enough. Look at what he wrote on it: word choice! Vary sentences! Style!*
> **Pablo:** *I'm not sure what that means.*
> **Deke:** *Me, either. I made no mistakes. What more does he want?*

Do *you* know what more he wants? Do you know what the teacher's comments mean? Let's look at the description of **Style & Language Use** from the rubric:

Effective Writers chose the words they use carefully, showing they know who the audience is and keeping them interested.

- Write fluently and make the essay easy to read;
- Uses artful word choice and precise language;
- Uses a well-defined voice and a clear sense of audience;
- Uses well-structured and varied sentences.

Say,

1. If **Deke's paper** was evaluated with a **6-Point Rubric,** he probably got a score of 3 or 4 for Style & Language Use. Why didn't he get a 6 if he didn't make any mistakes?

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Is avoiding mistakes the point? Would you say you were an excellent dancer because you hardly ever fall down or smash into other people? Avoiding mistakes isn't the point of dancing, and it isn't the point of writing, either.

2. Good writers, like good dancers, can use different styles for different situations. When you are writing, the **audience** is the key: What are you trying to accomplish with that audience? If Deke decides to talk to his English teacher about the paper, his language will probably be a little different from what you saw in the previous scene, when he was talking to a friend.

It's hard to find a simple definition of "**style,**" but you might say style is a result of all the decisions you make as a writer. Think about style in clothing. Deciding what to wear on a given day takes more than one decision. You have to decide about hat, shoes, and everything between them. Your style in writing depends on a lot of decisions, too, but the two most important ones might be word choice and sentence structure. Another way to think of style is to think of ***voice-*** what kind of personality comes through from the writing?

3. Explain that **tone** and **voice** are not the same. Tone is the attitude that lies behind the words. Has anyone ever said to you, "Don't use that tone with me"? If so, the person must have heard a disrespectful not in the words, but in the way the words were said. You know that you can say the words "School starts next week." in many different tones, depending on what your attitude is. You can describe tone in writing by using the same words you'd use to describe moods or emotion: happy, triumphant, sly, humorous, angry, fearful, and everything else.

Be careful with interpreting tone in writing. How can you tell if tone is sincere or sarcastic? You can't see the speaker's face or hear the way the words are said, so some clues are missing. **Context** is important. If your family returns from an outing to find the kitchen flooded and the tap left on, someone might say, "What genius left the water running?" We know the tone is sarcastic and "genius" is used to mean its opposite, "idiot."

The type of essay you are writing also determines your tone. The chart below shows the range of tone you should shoot for in each type of essay.

Narrative	Informal, casual, friendly, humorous
Informative	Formal, serious, concise, exact
Persuasive	Formal, convincing, prevailing, influential

Voice is related to tone, but is not the same thing. While tone reveals the attitude or emotions behind a particular word or sentence, voice is the personality that comes through from the whole writing. Voice includes more than emotion and attitude. It also includes authority.

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We might describe different voices as being ***speculative*** (*suggesting or investigating*), ***tentative*** (*not really sure of himself or herself*), ***authoritative*** (*"This is the captain speaking."*), and even arrogant, talking to you as if you don't know anything.

Word Choice

The exact words that you choose affect **tone, attitude, imagery,** and, **voice**. Just as with your speaking tone, your written tone can reveal any emotion or attitude a person can feel. **Tone** can be positive or negative, happy or sad, angry or peaceful, hopeful or desperate, and so on.

Here are two ways a father can ask his daughter about a boy he saw her walking with. Try reading them aloud to see the differences in tone and attitude. Key words that show **tone** and **attitude** are in italics.

> **Father 1:** *"Who was that fool I saw you sneaking around with on the street?"*
> **Father 2:** *"Was that your new Prince Charming I saw you with?"*
> Another way to ask the question would reveal a more neutral, matter-of-fact tone:
> **Father 3:** *"Who was that boy you were walking with?"*

Word choice also affects ***imagery***, the pictures created by your words in the mind of your reader. Certainly "fool" and "Prince Charming" make different pictures for the reader, but even less obvious words have their effects. The ***denotation*** of a word is its dictionary definition, but denotation doesn't tell the whole story. Words' ***connotations***, the personal reactions people have to words, are much more powerful.

Think about whether you are trying to create a positive (Prince Charming) or negative (fool) or neutral (young boy) impression with the words you choose.

Suppose you wanted to say that you are ***not active***. You could choose many different words to express that thought, and their connotations could be wildly different. Let's try a few different word choices, with connotations for each in parentheses.

Model

Suppose you wanted to say that you are ***not active***. You could choose many different words to express that thought, and their connotations could be wildly

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different. Let's try a few different word choices, with connotations for each in parentheses.

I am still (are you listening for something?)

I am relaxed (good for you, no worries)

I am inactive (is your battery dead?)

I am unmoving (are you conscious?)

I am frozen in place (are you terrified?)

Each of these words creates a different image or picture. You don't need to spend ten minutes choosing every word you write, but it is a good idea to look for key words in your paper and make the best choice you can. Big words aren't always better than small ones, so don't choose on the basis of size.

You might choose on the basis of degree - how strong or extreme a word do you want? The chart below shows related words along a range of meaning, with "values" assigned to each level.

Nickel words	Dime words	Quarter words	Dollar words	Fifty-dollar words
a lot	plenty	abundance	incalculable	plethora
mad	angry	furious	livid	apoplectic
small	tiny	little	miniscule	diminutive
exciting	thrilling	incredible	overwhelming	scintillating
happy	joyous	overjoyed	elated	ecstatic
awful	horrible	horrendous	dreadful	onerous
loud	roaring	ear-splitting	deafening	thunderous
friendly	outgoing	amiable	extroverted	gregarious
shy	bashful	reserved	introverted	reticent
bad	evil	despicable	malicious	heinous
big	large	huge	gigantic	titanic
loud	showy	flashy	gaudy	ostentatious
kind	giving	generous	charitable	philanthropic

You get the idea. A specific word that creates a clear image or picture is better than a vague or general one. "Big" is hard to picture, while "gigantic" is easy.

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Write Your Own Progress Report

This activity will help you to remember the importance of word choice and how it affects tone, attitude, imagery, and the audience's response. Here is an imaginary progress report to your parent or parents explaining your work and behavior in a class.

(Your name) is an **average** student in (name of course). Most of his/her work is done **on time** and is **fairly complete**. Test grades are **satisfactory.** He/she shows **some** interest in course material and is usually **attentive** in class.

In discussions, he/she **sometimes** contributes **useful** ideas to the class. Overall, (your name) seems to **like** the class and is always **polite** to me and **respectful** toward other students.

This report is pretty neutral, right? Your job is to rewrite it twice—once to make it extremely positive and again to make it extremely negative. The reader of the positive report should want to take you out and buy you a present. The reader of the negative report should want to call the police. You can create these two opposite effects by changing the boldfaced words to very positive or very negative words. You can use more than one word in any blank. Have fun.

On the Positive Side

(Your name) is a (n) _____ student in (name of course). Most of his/her work is done _____ and is_____. Test grades are _____. He/she shows _____ interest in course material and is usually _____ in class. In discussions, he/she _____ contributes_____ ideas to the class. Overall, (your name) seems to _____ **the** class and is always _____ to me and _____ toward other students.

On the Negative Side

(Your name) is a (n) _____ student in (name of course). Most of his/her work is done_____ and is _____. Test grades are _____. He/she shows _____ interest in course material and is usually_____ in class. In discussions, he/she _____ contributes _____ ideas to the class. Overall, (your name) seems to_____ **the** class and is always _____ to me and _____ toward other students.

You can elicit responses from students of positive and negative reports and emphasize that word choice makes the difference. The suggested answers that follow can be also be reviewed to illustrate that the same basic structure creates very different effects because of word choice.

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On the Positive Side

(Your name) is an outstanding student in (name of course). Most of his/her work is done well ahead of schedule and is of superior quality. Test grades are excellent. He/she shows amazing interest in course material and is usually brilliant in class. In discussions, he/she consistently contributes significant ideas to the class. Overall, (your name) seems to love the class and is always extremely sweet to me and helpful toward other students.

On the Negative Side

(Your name) is a terrible student in (name of course). Most of his/her work is done reluctantly and late and is laughable. Test grades are embarrassing. He/she shows zero interest in course material and is usually unconscious in class. In discussions, he/she maliciously contributes useless, irrelevant ideas to the class. Overall, (your name) seems to hate the class and is always disrespectful to me and abusive toward other students.

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Mechanics and Conventions

Sentence Structure

The name of this characteristic on the rubric is Language Use/Sentence Structure. Deke's teacher wrote "Word choice" and "Vary sentences" to tell him how to improve in the area of language use and sentence structure.

If Deke's paper is full of simple, repetitive sentences, it won't be very interesting to read. Just writing long sentences might not be an improvement, either. *A variety* of sentences would be an improvement.

There are entire books about sentence structure, and we don't have room to do a thorough job here of teaching you 20 different sentence structures. You will, however, see the two worst mistakes you can make with sentences and also the four basic sentence types.

A Little Variety

Here are two expressions of the same idea in sentences of different lengths.

1. I went to the show. I was early. I was the only one there. No one else was there. I waited for half an hour. I had a lot of time. I thought a lot. Then more people came. Two more came. We went in. We went in together. We took seats. We sat in the balcony.

2. I went to the show so early that it was half an hour before two others arrived, so I had a lot of time to think before we went in and sat down together in the balcony. Most writing does not look like either of these examples. Most writing has a mix of shorter and longer sentences, like this third example.

3. I went to the show, but I was early. I was the only one there. As I waited for half an hour, I had a lot of time to think. Then two others came and we went in and took seats in the balcony.

Bad Sentences, Good Sentences

Tell students that the two worst mistakes you can make with sentences are opposites: *fragments* and *run-on sentences*. Fragments are not enough—they are incomplete sentences that leave out the subject, the verb, or both. Here are some examples:

- Went slowly down the beach (no subject)

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- All of us (no verb)
- The other day (no subject or verb)

You can see that these fragments could be assembled to make a respectable sentence: *The other day, all of us went slowly down the beach*.

Fragments can often be corrected just by adding something or combining several fragments—but first you have to see them. An important part of the editing process is reviewing your paper just for sentence errors.

Run-on sentences, as the name suggests, run on and on and on, like a breathless person telling you an exciting story with stopping to breathe: *The other day, all of us went slowly down the beach and the man looked suspicious but he wasn't anybody we knew so we went farther and got wet and the man showed up again and we said "Hey, stop" but he turned and kept walking I guess he didn't hear us.*

Do you know how to "repair" this run-on? You make it into several shorter sentences. The added punctuation is in boldface so you can see the corrections. *The other day, all of us went slowly down the beach***. We saw a** *man* **who** *looked suspicious***,** *but he wasn't anybody we knew***.** **We** *went farther and got wet***,** *and the man showed up again***. We** *said "Hey, stop***,"** *but he turned and kept walking***.** *I guess he didn't hear us.*

A short sentence isn't always a fragment, and a long one isn't always a run-on, but sentence length is something to look for when you review your paper. Besides getting rid of fragments and run-on sentences, you can see if you have written varied sentences rather than all short or all long.

Sentence Types

There are four basic types of sentences. If you want to be able to write an essay with varied sentences, you'll need to know how to write all four, as well as how to avoid fragments and run-on sentences. Here are the four types:

Simple: I'm writing this simple sentence. (One subject and one verb)

Compound: I'm writing some simple sentences, but this one is compound. (Two simple sentences joined by a comma and "but")

Complex: Although I'm writing some simple sentences, this one is complex. (An introductory clause added to a simple sentence)

Compound-Complex: Although I'm writing different sentence types, this one is compound-complex, and I'm glad there aren't more types. (An introductory clause added to two simple sentences joined by a comma and "and")

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Fix These Sentences

Tell students that the paragraph that follows has several errors in sentence structure. Students should rewrite the paragraph and fix the sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

> *I had to run home while the bumblebees chased me because I had accidentally wrecked their nest and my bike fell down and I scraped my knee and they wouldn't stop chasing me. All the way home. My grandmother was surprised and screamed. When she saw me. I had bumblebees in my hands and there were lots of stings and my bike was gone so she put a cold cloth on my forehead and I said my knee was hurt too. That was quite a day.*

What follows is one way to correct the sentence errors in the paragraph. If you elicit responses from students, they will come up with other effective ways to rewrite the paragraph.

> ***I had to run home while the bumblebees chased me because I had accidentally wrecked their nest. When my bike fell down, I scraped my knee. The bees wouldn't stop, and they chased me all the way home. My grandmother was surprised and screamed when she saw me. I had bumblebees in my hands, and there were lots of stings. My bike was gone. She put a cold cloth on my forehead, and I said my knee was hurt, too. That was quite a day.***

Apply:

Ask students to return to their own year-round schooling essay to see what refinements they can make in Language Use and Sentence Structure.

The first step is to review the Focus Checklist and understand that they are writing as students to the principal in an attempt to persuade. In this role, the writer should be directive but respectful.

Next, they should read through the essay response and find 5-10 words that can be replaced with more appropriate words. Replacements might be more appropriate because they are more specific, more powerful or directive, and the like.
Point out that, as was true in the positive and negative progress reports, changing a few words can make a dramatic difference.

Tell students they can also edit their work for sentence structure. This should be done in a separate reading, attending only to sentence structure. They should be

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on the lookout for short, choppy sentences and also for long, rambling ones--these are the "likeliest suspects" for sentence fragments and run-on sentences. As they read, they can mark the "suspects" and rewrite them into sentences more likely to be correct.

Summing Up:

The domain of Language Use/Sentence Structure involves a number of elements of style, most of which depend on the writer's role with the intended audience. Voice and tone are the personality and attitude that come through from the writing. Word choice affects voice, tone, attitude, and imagery (what the writer pictures).

Denotation is a word's dictionary definition. Connotation, the associations and reactions people have toward a word, is often more powerful. Connotations can create positive (slender), neutral (slim), or negative (skinny) reactions.

Run-on sentences (too much) and sentence fragments (too little) are two common errors in sentence structure.

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Mapping your ELA curriculum

Essential Questions:

1. How can you map your instructional program in writing to State standards?
2. How can you use MY Access!® program features to start next year with high expectations and good performance?
3. How can you troubleshoot—how can program features help you deal with a diverse population of students with a variety of writing problems?

Objectives:

- map your year-long ELA course to your state standards
- map days allotted to state writing standards
- the first few weeks - effective diagnosis and planning

Where is the real curriculum?

The State ELA curriculum - what's supposed to happen.

Here's the map of a typical state ELA curriculum.

Let's begin by checking off the standards and bulleted items that are actually addressed by the state assessments.

Only a few of the 18 items are assessed by state writing sample.

Typical State Academic Standards for English Language Arts

Reading/Literature

- Use effective reading strategies to achieve their purposes in reading
- Read, interpret, and critically analyze literature
- Read and discuss literary and nonliterary texts in order to understand human experience
- Read to acquire information

Writing

- Create or produce writing to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes
- Plan, revise, edit, and publish clear and effective writing
- Understand the function of various forms, structures, and punctuation marks of standard American English and use them appropriately in communications

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Oral Language

- Orally communicate information, opinions, and ideas effectively to different audiences for a variety of purposes
- Listen to and comprehend oral communications
- Participate effectively in discussion

Language

- Develop their vocabulary and ability to use words, phrases, idioms, and various grammatical structures as a means of improving communication

- Recognize and interpret various uses and adaptations of language in social, cultural, regional, and professional situations, and learn to be flexible and responsive in their use of English

Media and Technology

- Use computers to acquire, organize, and communicate information
- Make informed judgments about media and products
- Create media products appropriate to audience and purpose
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of media production and distribution
- Analyze and edit media work as appropriate to audience and purpose

Research and Inquiry

- Conduct research and inquiry on self-selected or assigned topics, issues, or problem and use an appropriate form to communicate their findings

The de facto ELA curriculum—what actually happens in classrooms

This is the level at which you change a program. Let's begin by assigning a block of instructional days, from a total of 160, to each of the 6 standards.

Let's get numbers in common before we go on to the next step. We'll take standards one at a time. Let's also hear your reason for the number of days you suggest.

Next are the eighth grade performance standards for writing at another level of detail. Let's take the number of days assigned to the general standard for writing and allocate the days to each of these more detailed standards

To keep the math simple, we'll work with percentages, as if you have 100 days to spend on it all. How many days would you spend on each part?

This is artificial because many of your lessons will be integrated, but the exercise will give us an idea of what your views are of the important areas.

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Typical State Department on Public Instruction Model Academic Standards

EIGHTH GRADE Performance Standards

By the end of grade eight, students will:

B.8.1 Create or produce writing to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

- Write a coherent and complete expository piece, with sufficient detail to fulfill its purpose, sufficient evidence to support its assertions, language appropriate for its intended audience, and organization achieved through clear coordination and subordination of ideas
- Write a persuasive piece (such as a letter to a specific person or a script promoting a particular product) that includes a clear position, a discernible tone, and a coherent argument with reliable evidence
- Write a narrative based on experience that uses descriptive language and detail effectively, presents a sequence of events, and reveals a theme
- Write clear and pertinent responses to verbal or visual material that communicate, explain, and interpret the reading or viewing experience to a specific audience
- Write creative fiction that includes major and minor characters, a coherent plot, effective imagery, descriptive language, and concrete detail
- Write in a variety of situations (during an exam, in a computer lab) and adapt strategies, such as revision, technology, and the use of reference materials, to the situation
- Use a variety of writing technologies including pen and paper as well as computers
- Write for a variety of readers, including peers, teachers, and other adults, adapting content, style, and structure to audience and situation

B.8.2 Plan, revises, edit, and publish clear and effective writing

- Produce multiple drafts, including finished pieces, that demonstrate the capacity to generate, focus, and organize ideas and to revise the language, organization, content, and tone of successive drafts in order to fulfill a specific purpose for communicating with a specific audience
- Identify questions and strategies for improving drafts in writing conferences with a teacher
- Given a writing assignment to be completed in a limited amount of time, produce a well developed, well organized, and effective response in correct English and an appropriate voice

B.8.3 Understand the function of various forms, structures, punctuation marks of standard American English and use them appropriately in communications.

- Understand the functions of words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence and use them effectively, including coordinate and subordinate conjunctions, relative pronouns, and comparative adjectives
- Use correct tenses to indicate the relative order of events
- Understand and employ principles of agreement, including subject-verb, pronoun-noun, and preposition-pronoun
- Punctuate compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences correctly
- Employ the conventions of capitalization
- Spell frequently used words correctly and use effective strategies for spelling unfamiliar words

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Powering Up Your Writing Program with Vantage

Begin by mapping out your present course into five-week chunks—not every lesson, but general topics or book titles or units that take a week or more. This will oversimplify what you do in the classroom, but it is a place to start.

Next, define the learning goals

Align the state standards and objectives with these learning goals.

Identify the alignment to your state or district assessment. (i.e. - PSSA, CAHSEE, STAR, Terra Nova, and/or district assessments)

List all of the current assessment tools in place to assess the standards and objectives. For example performance tasks, journals, observations, anecdotal records and/.or self-assessment tools. Consider how many "rehearsals" you would want to include for each of these assessments

Identify specific content resources you would use. For example, specific teacher-created materials, intervention resources, multicultural literature, textbooks.

Next, write in where you will use MY Access!® materials to diagnose, introduce, develop, and/or reinforce writing abilities. Consider when and how you will use each of the MY Access!® features:

- various kinds of prompts or tasks
- how to analyze prompts or tasks
- understanding structure of informational, literary, and persuasive texts
- rubrics and the key domains or characteristics of effective writing
- stages in the writing process
- evaluating your own writing and your peers' writing with rubrics
- explanations, models, and instructions in the Teacher's Guide or Writer's Guide
- developmental activities in the Teacher's Guide or online Writer's Guide
- analysis and diagnosis of each student's writing abilities and needs (see section IV. for "The first ten days")

In addition, consider the type of instructional strategies you might use:

- Direct instruction in the writing process
- Task Analysis (Focus checklist) chart
- Graphic Organizers (mapping, Venn, KWL etc)
- Summarizing
- Paraphrasing
- Modeling (read and analyze model opinion essays)
- Classroom debate

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- Direct instruction on topic sentences and supporting details
- Direct instruction on persuasive writing
- Think-Pair-Share
- Mini-paragraphs
- Role playing
- Rubrics
- Writing Portfolio
- Checklist for Revision
- Read aloud
- Teacher-student conference
- Models of text organizational patterns: opinion-reason, thesis-proof, topic-aspect,, how-to, true-narrative, fictional narrative
- Models of text development patterns: compare/contrast, order (sequential, chronological), defining by key features, defining by familiar examples, illustrating with a story, classifying

After you roughly sketch the eight 5 - week blocks, make a more detailed plan for the first block, the first five weeks.

We'll want the course opener to show expectations teachers have — and students should have — for their writing and other work.

We'll want to have valuable diagnostic information upon which to make instructional decisions.

We'll want to have completed the instruction that we'll keep coming back to all through the year, and we'll want to have given students measures they can understand and use to evaluate and improve their own work.

Oh, and, of course, we'll want to have done some reading and writing and discussing and some work with independent and text-based tasks.

And have completed a mini - portfolio of student work for each student in class. That's all.

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Developing Student Writing: The First Ten Days (and the rest of them)

What follows are three sketches of plans you might use for the first few weeks of class. These are not offered as the only ways to get started, but as ways that will allow you to get the information you need to plan instruction for individual students, groups within the class, and the whole class.

Teachers tell me that they don't find it helpful to get boxes of folders stuffed with papers from last year's writing. They don't find it particularly helpful to get a list of student grades, either, as these grades are usually course grades rather than grades for writing or characteristics of performance in writing.

If you have information you find helpful, use it. If you need (or want) to gather your own, here is a way to do it in two weeks of class, but without simply testing for ten days. In ten days you can have not only a rich writing sample from each student, a mini-portfolio, really, but also a score profile showing strengths and weaknesses along the five characteristics of performance. You can also have taught the necessary vocabulary and terms, the rubric's uses for scoring and instruction and goal-setting, self- and peer-evaluation strategies, and the MY Access!® scoring model and method.

Students will have completed three full-length essays. They will have worked as individuals, in small groups, and as a whole class, and will have explored the dimensions of their own writing with tools not available to them before. Not bad for ten days?

Again, the sketches of plans below are meant not as inflexible schedules but as models to modify for your own needs. The plans assume that a class period is at least 36 minutes long.

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Sample Plan A

Day 1-3

- For 5 minutes, students write about what makes good writing. Discuss their responses and list useful ones on board, adding (if necessary) MY Access!® terms of Meaning/Focus, etc. from rubric.
- Hand out copes if the MY Access!® analytical rubric. Select and complete activities from the "What are the Characteristics of Effective Writing?" lesson.
- Introduce students to analyzing the task (Lesson: "The Reading Before the Writing"
- Assign for homework (on photocopied materials) the analysis of a independent writing task
- Using a photocopied task, students begin an independent writing task in class.
- Ask students to assess their own writing samples with a rubric.

Day 4-5

- In the computer lab, students complete the task, submit it for analytical scoring, and print a copy for you.
- Before the next class, you skim the papers and review the scores.
- Give students their papers, the rubrics, and their scores.
- Working in groups of two-three, they review each paper and "prove" the scores by finding examples in the papers to support the scores for Meaning/Focus, etc.
- You read aloud the two or three best responses, commenting about score characteristics as you go
- Assign for homework (on photocopied materials) the analysis of a text-based informational task

Day 6:

- In class or lab, students see informational text for the task and begin to complete it

Day 7-8:

- In lab, students complete task, submit for scoring and print copy for you

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After you model the process, give students their papers and the rubrics and have them score their own papers for each characteristic with the rubrics—they must write a sentence of explanation for each characteristic.

Give them MY Access!® score reports for the same papers and discuss the compared results
Assign for homework (on photocopied materials) the analysis of a text-based literary task

Day 9-10

- In class or lab, students see literary text for the task and begin to complete it
- In lab, students complete task, submit for analytical scoring and print copy for you

Day 11:

- Each student completes a score profile for the three tasks completed.

Day 12:

- With your help, students write goals for improving their writing within specific characteristics of performance, starting at the "top" with Meaning/Focus. They can refer to their papers and score profiles and individual papers to find specific areas needing work. The rubric descriptions will give them the language they need to express their goals in measurable terms.

Sample Plan B

Week 1: Orientation to key words on rubric and course operation, logging on, etc.

3 Days

- Do Independent Writing 1 by giving students photocopies of the task so you can see their planning and analysis moves.
- Finish drafting next day and submit for scores.
- Do two methods of development activities (from Writer's Guide) and discuss usefulness of each method with each topic. You evaluate informally for focus/meaning and content/development.

Week 2: Read and discuss a few poems to begin making interpretations and to get students writing about the title and connecting it to other elements of

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poem. Add names of figurative language and other techniques as you go. Assign opinion-reason pattern writing to be done: Is this a good poem?

5 Days

- Using a MY Access!® rubric for a text-based task, students evaluate these opinion-reason essays by highlighting rubric blocks which describe the essay, writing justifications for domain scores by citing examples from papers.
- Show students MY Access!® scores on independent writing, along with program feedback. Also show peer scores and feedback and *your* scores and feedback on poem essay. Show grade equivalent chart for comparison with % grades. Tour Writer's Guide for help for students.
- Take two days to complete some task analysis activities from the Writer's Guide. Point out technique of boxing in key words of context features.

Week 3:

5 days

- Do two more method of development activities from Student Guide
- Photocopy and give an informational text-based task from middle school prompts. Students analyze and begin drafting.
- Students complete drafts on computers and submit for scores.
- Do peer-evaluation (two readers must agree) and feedback and then compare with MY Access!® evaluation and feedback. Students make revising plans based on feedback, which might include a visit to the Writer's Guide. Revise online and submit for scores.

Week 4: If students are doing well with 1st two domains, move on to organization and teach all six MY Access!® patterns from the Writer's Guide or your own materials. Show how selecting pattern happens during task analysis. Also teach transitions in the Writer's Guide - this is "Organization Week."

- Photocopy and assign literary text-based task from the Guide or the prompts. Students should plan with rubric in hand, then write and submit for scoring.

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Week 5 +: Scoring discussion should also be a literature discussion - what did we learn about the work from reading other papers? Students receive own scores and feedback, make revising plan, revise, and resubmit.

Sample Plan C

Week 1: Orientation to key words on rubric and course operation, logging on, etc.

3-4 days

- Select activities from "Characteristics of Effective Writing" Section of the Student worksheets. Select and assign an independent writing prompt and provide students with photocopies of task.
- Give students a photocopy of the Focus Checklist.
- Teach all six MY Access!® organizational patterns from the online Writer's Guide or Teacher's Guide (The Importance of Organization)
- Guide. Show how selecting pattern happens during task analysis.
- Finish drafting next day. Students key in their essays for scoring.

Week 2: Literature Analysis

5 Days

- Read and discuss a few poems to begin making interpretations and to get students writing about titles and other elements of the poems.
- Add names of figurative language and other techniques as you go.
- Assign opinion-reason pattern writing to be done for one poem: Is this a good poem?
- Using a MY Access!® rubric for a text-based task, students evaluate these opinion-reason essays by highlighting rubric blocks which describe the essay, writing justifications for domain scores by citing examples from papers.
- Show students MY Access!® scores on independent writing (narrative, persuasive, informative) along with program feedback.
- Also show peer scores and feedback and *your* scores and feedback on poem essay. Show grade equivalent chart for comparison with % grades. Note that MY Access!® reports only whole-number scores,

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but that you might score a paper as a 4.5, etc. Also, averages of scores for a 10-week block could be 4.8, 5.2, and so on.

- Take a day to complete some task analysis activities from the Teacher's Guide-Analyzing the Task for Contexts and Purpose). Use the Focus Checklist and select additional learning activities. Point out technique of boxing in key words of context features.

Week 3: Development

- Complete 2 Method of development activities from offline Teacher's Guide or online Writer's Guide, Comparing and Contrasting and Making an Order. Then discuss the usefulness of each method with each topic. You evaluate informally for focus/meaning and content/development.

- Do 2 more method of development activities from Writer's Guide, Defining by Key Features and Defining by Familiar Examples. Do the remaining 3 method of development activities, Using Cause and Effect, Showing with a Story, and Classifying and Explaining Characteristics.

- Photocopy and give a MY Access!® informational text-based task. Students use the Focus Checklist to analyze and begin drafting.

- Students complete drafts on computers and submit for scores.

Week 4 – Evaluation: Do peer-evaluation (two readers must agree) and feedback and then compare with MY Access!® evaluation and feedback. Students make revising plans based on feedback, which might include a visit to the Writer's Guide. Students record their revision plans into their Writer's Journal and print out a copy for your review.

5 Days

- Revise online and submit for scores. Score only for

- Focus/meaning, Organization, and Content/development.

- Photocopy and assign literary text-based task from the Guide or the prompts. Students should plan with rubric in hand.

- Write and submit for scoring for first three domains.

- Scoring discussion should also be a literature discussion—what did we learn about the work from reading other papers? Students

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receive own scores and feedback and make a revising plan. Make revising plan.

Week 5 +

- Students follow plans to revise and resubmit for scoring. Continue to concentrate on the first three domains.

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What did you and your students accomplish in the first few weeks of class?

- You learned and became fluent in the key words and concepts for planning, revising and evaluating writing
- You completed whole works and activities with attention to specific domains, such as focus/meaning.
- You completed almost 20 writings, many of them scored, some of them revisions.
- You completed independent writing, informational and literary text-based tasks
- You introduced and practiced with 7 methods of development and 6 organizing patterns.
- You've had 5 discussions about poetry, its merits, writing, and its merits.
- Students will have developed a methodology for approaching a writing or reading/writing task that requires them to seek help, feedback, advice, and even additional developmental work from the Writer's Guide
- You will have a class portfolio that shows each student's performance on each prompt for each domain. You can make whole-class assignments and part-class assignments for more work based on who needs what. Your in-class talks and demonstrations and mini-lessons can focus not on hypothetical situations, but on what is actually happening with your writers on these tasks.

For the rest of the course, you can select prompts and developmental activities and everything else you plan on the basis of your students' known performance. For children with special needs, small adjustment can make MY Access!® features more accessible. For exceptional students, more difficult and challenging prompts can be allowed. Prompts can be modified to include the requirement that at least four different methods of development be used to complete the response.

About here the question comes, "But when does spelling count? How many points off for each mistake in usage?"

The MY Access!® answer is that spelling and grammar count now—when you are pretty happy with student performance on focus/meaning, content / development / and organization. They count now, when you have a large body of the student's own work to look at so that you can see characteristic errors and attend to them.

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I would liken traditional spelling, grammar, and mechanics instruction to overkill. We flooded the terrain of school, of writing, especially, with ten feet of instruction—exercises based on somebody else's writing--for so many years that no possible error could burst into flame. However, as soon as we had students work on their own writings, the pesky flames of error appeared once more.

MY Access!® allows you to skip the costly and time-consuming inundation method. Let students write. Read it. Keep a water pistol handy. When you see errors such as:

- *he suppose to*
- *I aint gonna be the one*
- *it's difinate now*

...and so on, put out these tiny fires right where they are starting - and never expect to put them all out. The object is to save London from the fire, not to keep any matches from being struck.

How your work as a writing teacher changes

With MY Access!® in your corner, you are no longer the sole source of feedback, evaluation, and instruction. Everybody doesn't have to come to you for everything.

With the time you'll save from hand scoring thousands of essays a year and the benefits of the assessment information you get for students and classes, you become a manager of writing instruction, able to make recommendations to a single student or an entire class after a glance at My Access! ® feedback or class analysis

Since key features of MY Access!® are reading and writing instruction, you'll have no trouble integrating program instruction with your own instruction. You can conduct early diagnosis of writing problems and monitor the progress of the class and the individuals in it with the electronic portfolio.

- You can keep track of overall class performance using the variety of reporting tools.
- From there you can move to a score report, in the form of a bar graph, for one student on one response . . .
- The Student Score Profile will help you to see how one writer is progressing - and what he or she needs to do next. If the student information tells you more practice is needed on literary tasks, you can select one or more prompts of that kind from the bank of prompts.

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Score Profile

Name: _____

	Independent Writing- Persuasive, Informative, Narrative	Informational task	Literary task
Overall Score			
Focus & Meaning			
Content & Development			
Organization			
Language Use, Voice and Style			
Mechanics & Conventions			

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What's your lesson plan for this class?

You have a class of 25 8th graders. It's six weeks into the year and you've had all students write responses to at least 6 prompts. Here are the results:

- 6 writers are regularly scoring 5-6 on prompts of all kinds.
- 10 are regularly scoring 3-4, with an occasional 2 or 5, on prompts of all kinds, with scores consistent across domains.
- 3 are regularly scoring 2-3 on two or three domains but 5-6 on the others
- 2 score 5-6 on independent writing prompts and 2-4 on tasks involving on-demand reading
- 2 have scored everything from 1 to 6
- 2 score 1-2 on everything, even if you read aloud the prompts and texts.

What's your next move?

First of all, you can thank the MY Access!® Writing Program for giving you this array of diagnostic and instructional information. Without this sophisticated feedback, you might only know *grades*, which might look like this:

- 6 students in the range from 85-99
- 15 in the range from 65-84
- 4 in the range from 0-65

This grade report is the equivalent of a doctor telling a room full of patients that they're sick. Won't they want more information than that? And, ultimately, won't each want to know what to do about the problem?

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Troubleshooting Reading and Writing Problems

Of course, problems don't go away because you've diagnosed them, and goals aren't achieved just because they've been written. You and students will still need to "troubleshoot" their writing. Let's return to the hypothetical class results that introduced this section ***("What's your lesson plan?").*** With My Access! ®, here's what you might do next with each group.

6 writers are regularly scoring 5 - 6 on prompts of all kinds.

- Stress the differences between "6" and "5" descriptions for each rubric domain and have them target the first two domains for "6" scores on the next essay.
- Direct them to the Writer's Guide for activities to strengthen their writing in one or more domains.
- Use these competent writers as group leaders to help others analyze tasks and texts.

10 are regularly scoring 3 - 4, with an occasional 2 or 5, on prompts of all kinds, with scores consistent across domains.

- Stress the differences between "5" and "4" descriptions for each rubric domain and have them target the first two domains for "5" scores on the next essay.
- Direct them to the Writer's Guide for activities to strengthen their writing in these two domains.

3 are regularly scoring 2 - 3 on two or three domains but 5 - 6 on the others

- Show them this pattern and highlight what makes success on the domains for which they are unsuccessful. Have them target a higher score for two of these domains.
- Direct them to the Writer's Guide for activities to strengthen their writing in one or more domains.

2 score 5-6 on independent writing prompts and 2-4 on tasks involving on - demand reading

- Show them this pattern and direct them to the Focus/Meaning section of the Writer's Guide for instruction and developmental activities for analyzing texts. Read their responses to see if they are improving their ability to understand the structure of texts.

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2 have scored everything from 1 to 6

- Show them this pattern and direct them to the Focus/Meaning section of the Writer's Guide for instruction and developmental activities for analyzing tasks and texts. Read their responses to see if they are improving their ability to analyze tasks and write down the contexts. Do the same for their responses to the activities for understanding texts.

2 score 1-2 on everything, even if you read aloud the prompts and texts.

- Ask for help from a remedial reading or special education teacher to discover what reading difficulties might be preventing better performance.
- Print tasks and texts for these students and continue to read them aloud, asking students to underline key features of tasks and texts as you read.

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Using the Writer's Guide

You can't be everywhere at once. Even if you could, isn't your goal to make writers more independent, as well as more proficient? Each section dealing with a scoring domain has instruction, models, and many activities to help students develop their abilities in that domain.

The section above (*What's your lesson plan for this class?)* detailed many uses with an imaginary—but not too far from reality—class.

Perhaps the best way to tell you about the Writer's Guide is to say to take it for a test - drive. If you are an experienced teacher of writing, you will find your own specialized applications, as well as the obvious ones.

Present mini-lessons. Whenever a sizeable part of your class is having the same kind of problem, materials from prompts of the Writer's Guide can be used to conduct the class lesson on, say, "the structure of the opinion-reason pattern," or "Writing the Bridge" or analyzing the literary task." A 10-minute lesson before starting a prompt or task is a good way to make your point *before* the writing is done.

Students can work as individuals and in groups to improve their writing. Perhaps you have had students try self-editing and peer-editing. With Vantage rubrics and sample papers, students can learn to better assess their own work and that of their peers. Some activities:

- give them a paper scored as a "3" and tell them to prove it by finding evidence in the paper that fits the "3" description on the appropriate rubric.
- give them a paper scored as a "2" and tell them to make a plan to revise it to be a "4"—but no better than a "4" (on a 6-point scale). To do this, they will have to pay strict attention to rubric descriptions.
- give them two papers and a forced choice: one is better than the other. which one? for which characteristics?

For all of these activities, the classroom discussions and differences of opinion usually bring out all the points we want to make as teachers of writing. Instead of running a test-prep course, you can conduct a rich course in writing and other aspects of language arts—and still prepare your students for the demands of state and national assessments.

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Developing an Action Plan

Types of Plans:

You might design action plans for several different purposes. The most obvious reason is to improve student achievement, either on state assessments or another scale of performance. Another purpose for an action plan is to develop staff capabilities for specific instructional techniques, such as teaching students how to analyze a task or prompt. A third purpose is to develop the necessary materials and activities to accomplish a particular goal, as in expanding the number of locally-designed performance tasks for persuasive writing. Another, larger purpose is to design a building-wide or district-wide initiative to achieve some or all of the other purposes for one or more disciplines, as in developing a writing across the curriculum program for the middle school.

If you are a teacher, your most likely purpose is the first one, improving student achievement. Since this is the purpose that most closely fits your level of responsibilities, we'll use improving student achievement as the example for the explanation of action plan procedure.

Procedure:

1. The first step in making an action plan is defining goals or objectives. Do you want overall scores to increase by a particular percentage? Do you want improved performance on a particular type of task, i.e., persuasive tasks or text-based tasks? Do you want improved performance on one or several domains of writing? Of course, how much improvement and how it will be measured are important issues.

As an example, a diet is a type of action plan. A person might decide to change eating habits to achieve any or several or many of these goals:

- to lose weight
- to lose inches of waistline, etc.
- to sleep better
- to lower cholesterol
- to increase energy and feel better
- to reduce risk of heart attack, stroke, or other illness
- to respond to an injury or disease, such as diabetes
- to avoid certain foods or classes of foods, such as meat

Each goal calls for different measures of achievement. So it is with an action plan for improving writing instruction and performance. If you use the Vantage survey about ELA instruction, you can find a starting point for the classroom level or the building level.

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What are the goals of this action plan and how will achievement be measured?

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The next step is establishing baseline data. If you have reliable data from a state or standardized test, you might start with that. However, the measures of performance must be the same as those you will use at the end of the study. Two 6-point rubrics from different sources will probably not produce equivalent results.

If you follow the plan suggested for the first few weeks of school, you will have results from a number of different prompts, including text-based and independent writing tasks. You will have domain scores for individuals and a great deal of data that can be filters in different ways to give group results by domain, by type of prompt, and more.

What baseline data do you need and how will you collect it?

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Step three involves determining the course of action, the "treatment" or intervention that will produce the results you are looking for as measured by the same measures you used for the baseline data. Do you want every student to write one essay a week? Do you want to provide staff development for teachers for improved instruction in one or more domains of writing? Do you want every student to complete the developmental activities in the Writer's Guide and Teacher's Guide that connect directly with your state assessment in ELA?

This step includes deciding what kind, how many or how much, and for how long. It includes deciding if there will be only endpoint assessment or also midstream assessment to monitor the effectiveness of a longer program. It includes deciding *who* will do *what* and *how*.

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What is the proposed intervention - what kind, how many or how much, how long? *Who* will do *what* and *how*?

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