BC Performance Standards

Writing

Revised 2009

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Ministry of Education

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REVISED 2009

Revised in 2009 to incorporate the learning outcomes from English Language Arts K-7 (2006) and English Language Arts 8-12 (2007) and some additional information on the use of the BC Performance Standards.

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About the BC Performance Standards

Performance standards describe and characterize levels of actual performance in some key areas

The BC performance standards have been developed for voluntary use in BC schools. They describe the professional judgments of a significant number of BC educators about standards and expectations for the following key areas of learning:

- reading
- writing
- numeracy
- social responsibility

The BC performance standards are intended as a resource to support ongoing instruction and assessment. The standards focus exclusively on performance assessment, where students are asked to apply the skills and strategies they have developed to complete complex, realistic tasks. The performance standards do not address all aspects of learning or curriculum; they are focused only on performance in the key areas noted above. They emphasize criterion-referenced assessment in which students' performance is compared to explicit criteria. The performance standards enable teachers, students, and parents to compare student performance to provincial standards.

The BC performance standards can be used for various assessment purposes:

- assessment **for** learning – formative assessment that supports and guides learning
- assessment **as** learning –formative assessment that involves students in guiding their own learning
- assessment **of** learning – summative assessment that documents student learning

Levels of Student Performance

Together, curriculum and performance standards describe what students are expected to know and the levels they should achieve.

The BC performance standards describe levels of achievement in key areas of learning. The performance standards answer the questions: "*How good is good enough*? What does it look like when a student's work has met the expectations at this grade level?"

The BC performance standards describe student achievement in terms of prescribed learning outcomes in March-April of the school year and illustrate the following four levels of student performance:

NOT YET WITHIN EXPECTATIONS

- the work does not meet grade-level expectations
- there is little evidence of progress toward the relevant prescribed learning outcomes
- the situation needs intervention

MEETS EXPECTATIONS (MINIMAL LEVEL)

- the work may be inconsistent, but meets grade-level expectations at a minimal level
- there is evidence of progress toward relevant prescribed learning outcomes
- the student needs support in some areas

FULLY MEETS EXPECTATIONS

- the work meets grade-level expectations
- there is evidence that relevant prescribed learning outcomes have been accomplished

EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

- the work exceeds grade-level expectations in significant ways
- the student may benefit from extra challenges

Using the Standards

The BC performance standards are intended to support instructional decision-making. Teachers use a variety of methods to gather the information they need to assess, evaluate, and report on student learning. Possible methods include observations, student work portfolios, conferences, self- and peer assessment, classroom and standardized tests and performance tasks.

The BC performance standards give teachers one way to assess students' abilities to apply their learning in realistic performance tasks. Used with other methods, they can be an important part of a comprehensive assessment and evaluation system.

Performance Standards support ongoing instruction and assessment

Guidelines

THE STANDARDS:

- should be used as part of regular classroom learning activities, within the context of ongoing classroom instruction.
- provide resources for assessing and evaluating the quality of a specific piece or a collection of student work from various subject areas. They can help to develop a profile of student achievement, typically based on three to seven pieces of work.
- assume that in most cases teachers are observing students as they work. Often, some evidence needed to make decisions comes from observations and conversations with students.
- allow for teachers to intervene where students are unable to complete a task independently. The level of assistance required is often one of the criteria for determining whether or not a student's work falls within grade-level expectations.
- may be adapted as needed. For example, this might include creating class-developed rating scales in age-appropriate language, developing IEPs or other tailored evaluation, or adjusting expectations for different times of the year.

Adaptations

The BC Performance Standards reflect the participation and collective judgments of thousands of educators and thousands of students. They serve as a 'base' resource that educators are able to adapt and use to meet their needs for particular purposes. This ensures that BC educators continue to focus on a common set of standards and expectations, while at the same time, addressing specific needs. For example:

- Teachers frequently work with their students to develop 'kid-friendly' versions of the scales. This is most effective when students are involved in discussing the criteria and choosing the language.
- District assessments and other assessment tools often focus on selected criteria or aspects, and may involve re-wording or elaborating parts of a scale.
- Foundation Skills Assessment uses adaptations of the scales to suit the context of large-scale assessment.
- Districts and regions have created adaptations for summative end-of-grade assessments.
- Parts of the performance standard framework are often used in reporting.
- The criteria in various performance standards are used in commenting on student progress.
- Textbooks and accompanying teacher guides present adaptations focused on particular units of content or assignments.
- Educators have used the performance standards to create electronic templates that facilitate student self-assessment.

Groups of teachers across BC are using the performance standards in reading, writing, numeracy, and social responsibility as they engage in inquiry about learning. For example:

- The Network of Performance Based Schools is a province-wide action research community designed to improve student learning and to strengthen public education (www.npbs.ca).
- School-based learning teams often use BC PERFORMANCE STANDARDS as a focus for their inquiry.
- Districts sponsor action research groups where teachers from various schools focus on key aspects of learning.

Purposes

How the BC performance standards are used depends on the purpose for which they will be used.

Assessment *for* Learning	Assessment *as* Learning	Assessment *of* Learning
Formative assessment is *ongoing in the classroom* • teacher assessment, student self-assessment, and/or student peer assessment • criterion-referenced – criteria based provincial curriculum, reflecting performance in relation to a specific learning task • involves both teacher and student in a process of continual reflection and review • teachers adjust their plans and engage in corrective teaching in response to what they find out	**Formative assessment is *ongoing in the classroom*** • self-assessment • provides students with information on their own achievement and prompts them to consider how they can continue to improve their learning • student-determined criteria based on previous learning and personal learning goals • students use assessment information to make adaptations to their learning process and to develop new understandings	**Summative assessment occurs *at end of year or at key stages*** • teacher assessment • in BC this is criterion-referenced, based on provincial curriculum • information on student performance can be shared with parents/guardians, school and district staff, and other education professionals (e.g., for the purposes of curriculum development) • used to make judgments about students' performance in relation to provincial standards
Purpose: Use BC Performance Standards (BCPS) to *focus and monitor learning, provide feedback and, adjust instruction.* ***Example uses/adaptations:*** • Design learning activities and assessment tasks to provide evidence of the aspects of learning and the criteria described in the BCPS. • Develop a profile of a class or group of students to support instructional decision-making. • Focus instruction around selected criteria or aspects from BCPS, based on ongoing assessments. • Use criteria from BCPS to build shared understanding; make learning intentions explicit. • Use BCPS criteria to give students feedback on specific aspects of their learning, and on specific learning tasks.	**Purpose: Use BC Performance Standards (BCPS) to *engage students in discussing, reflecting on, assessing and shaping their own learning.*** ***Example uses/adaptations:*** • Work with students to develop 'kid-friendly' versions of specific BCPS that are relevant to learning intentions • Provide copies of BCPS for student reference and self-assessment. • Work with students to develop class criteria, based on the BCPS, for specific purposes. • Use BCPS to guide conference and group discussions about learning intentions and evidence of learning. • Use BCPS criteria to develop/ use various self-assessment prompts and formats. • Have students use selected criteria from BCPS to guide peer feedback.	**Purpose: Use BC Performance Standards (BCPS) *to monitor and report on student learning.*** ***Example uses/adaptations:*** • Document individual student progress in key areas of learning. • Use BCPS to identify students who will benefit from intervention. • Adapt BCPS to guide reporting and discussions with parents. • Use or adapt BCPS for use in school or district-wide assessments. • Use or adapt BCPS to develop evidence for school and district plans. • Focus on criteria in BCPS in school or district plans to improve achievement. • Use or adapt BCPS to evaluate programs and resources.

Where Performance Standards Are Used

BC Performance Standards are used to support learning at all levels of the school system in the province.

PROVINCIAL

- Provide basis for rating scales used in provincial assessments (Foundation Skills Assessment and English 10)
- Used as foundation for several sections and illustrations in the BC English Language Arts curriculum
- Used as a central resource for teacher inquiry in the Network of Performance Based Schools

DISTRICTS AND REGIONS

- Used in district assessments
- Provide basis for reporting systems
- Facilitate communication with community
- Offer a framework for collecting evidence for district plans
- Used in program and resource evaluations
- Provide framework for developing instructional resources

SCHOOLS

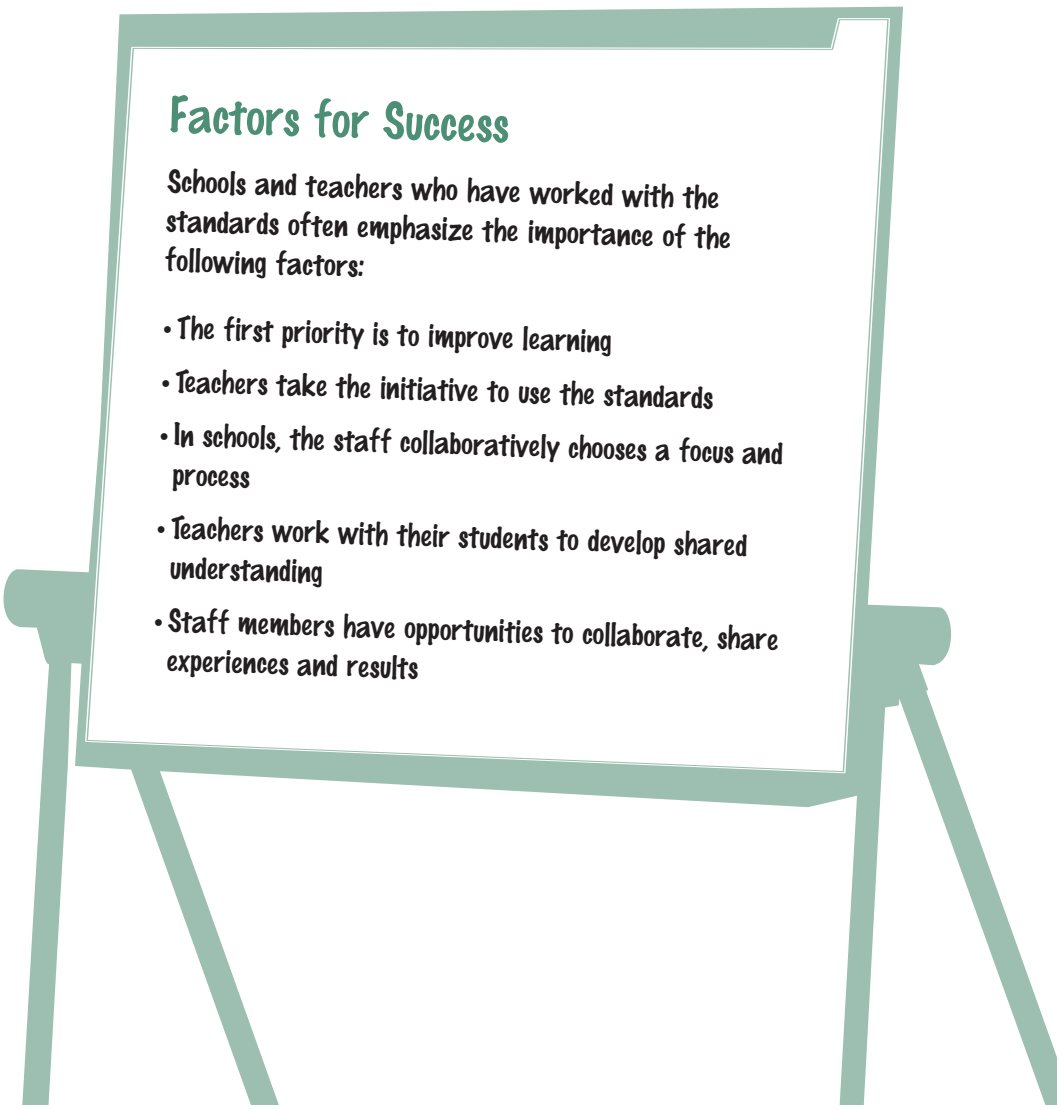
- Used in school-wide assessments
- Facilitate communication and articulation across grade levels
- Offer a framework for collecting evidence for school plans
- Used as part of reporting to parents
- Used to support and monitor school-wide initiatives

CLASSROOMS

- Provide descriptive feedback to students
- Offer a frame for developing criteria
- Support self-evaluation
- Consistent use of language: among teachers; with students; with parents
- Compare student performance to provincial standards
- Document evidence of student growth
- Help in report writing
- Provide exemplars teachers and students can refer to

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Facilitate communication between classroom teacher and support teachers
- Support development of IEPs
- Help to identify students who may benefit from intervention or extra challenges
- Provide framework for planning intervention
- Assist in communication with parents
- Document student growth



Performance Standards for Writing

Writing is central to success in school and in life. People write to record and explore their thoughts, feelings, and opinions; to communicate with others; and to express their ideas through the power and beauty of language.

The BC performance standards for writing describe student achievement in three types of writing: personal writing, writing to communicate ideas and information, and literary writing.

PERSONAL WRITING

Students often write to explore and extend their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. They react and reflect on current issues, on materials they have read, viewed or listened to, and on their own learning. Some personal writing is intended for an audience; however, often the writing is primarily intended to explore ideas.

WRITING TO COMMUNICATE IDEAS AND INFORMATION

Student success in and out of school is strongly related to their ability to communicate ideas. Writing to communicate ideas and information includes work that is intended to present information (e.g., articles or reports), outline procedures (e.g., instructions), and persuade others (e.g., editorials).

LITERARY WRITING

Students learn to appreciate the power and beauty of language as they explore a variety of literary forms, including stories and poems. Expressing ideas and imagination in literary forms can be a lifelong source of satisfaction and enjoyment and helps to connect students to the social and cultural life of their communities. In the *English Language Arts Integrated Resource Package*, literary writing is referred to as imaginative writing.

Some Definitions

Revise: rework to improve the structure and logic of ideas.
Edit: rework to improve grammar and expression of ideas.
Proofread: check for errors of spelling, punctuation, or grammar.

Impromptu Writing

When using impromptu writing with the Performance Standards, educators should keep in mind that:

- Impromptu writing is not a specific form of writing; it refers to the conditions under which students write. Any form of writing can be assigned for an impromptu piece of writing.
- As students become more skilled writers, there is often less difference between the quality of their impromptu writing and their crafted writing – they are able to apply some of the craft they have learned to 'text' situations. *However, no single piece of writing can provide a valid picture of a student's ability and achievement.*
- Any of the writing performance standards can be **adapted** for impromptu or test writing. Generally, adaptations should focus on:
  - adjusting expectations for style – this is an area that writers typically work on crafting after completing a first draft (e.g., they combine sentences, add figurative or vivid language that did not occur to them in getting their ideas down in an original draft)
  - recognizing that conclusions or endings are likely to be weak or missing, because students were unable to finish
  - understanding that occasional breaks in logic, or abrupt transitions may reflect the writing conditions, rather than the student's thought processes
  - exercising relatively high tolerance for errors in conventions, especially spelling; although students are often advised to check their work in a text situation, they frequently do not have the time or resources they need

Qualities of Writing

The qualities of writing in the performance standards focus on four aspects:

MEANING

- ideas and information, including development and use of detail
- the writer's appreciation and unique perspective on the topic (voice)

STYLE

- word choice: clarity, variety, and impact of language
- sentence fluency: sentences are varied, flow smoothly, and enhance meaning

FORM

- attention to the "rules" of the particular form of writing (e.g., stories, instructions, poetry)
- organization of ideas and information

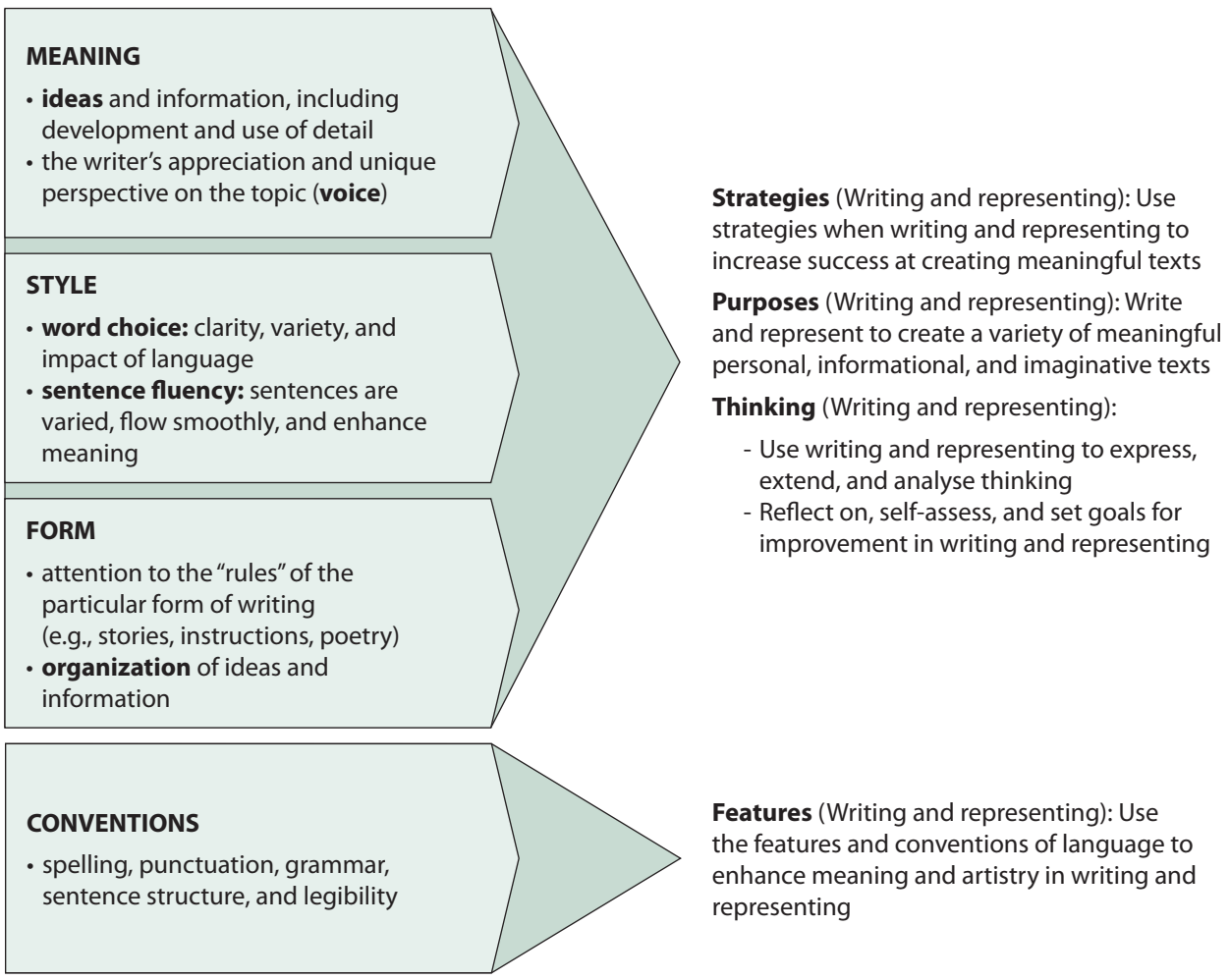
CONVENTIONS

- spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, and legibility

The specific criteria for each aspect vary depending on the type of writing and the grade level. These criteria are clearly described in the *Rating Scales and Quick Scales*.

Curriculum Connections

The four organizers of the English Language Arts curriculum relate to the four aspects of Qualities of Writing of the Writing Performance Standards. The performance standards are connected to the curriculum at a conceptual and holistic level, not at an outcome-by-outcome level.



Addressing the learning outcomes related to strategies can help students to develop their writing; however, the Writing Performance Standards describe the product not the processes used.

Students apply and extend their writing skills in other curriculum areas. For example:

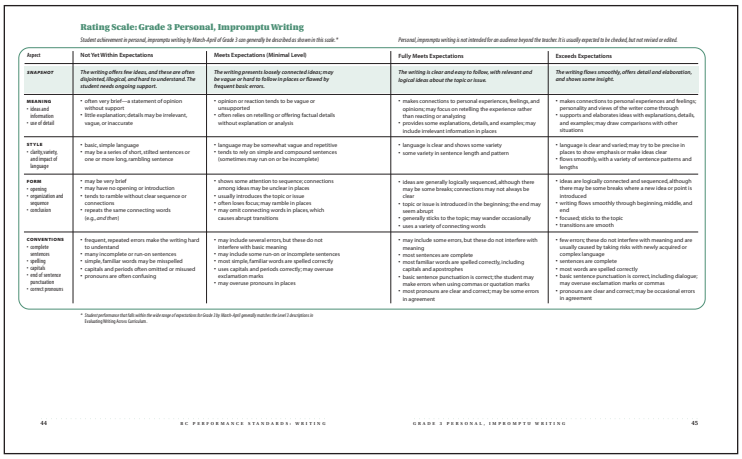
- In social studies, science, and fine arts students are often asked to communicate their ideas in writing. The performance standards for Writing to Communicate Ideas and Information can be used for formal writing projects in these subjects.
- In Grade 10, the performance standards for reports can be used for formal writing projects in social studies, sciences, and fine arts, as well as in English language arts.

In the English Language Arts Integrated Resource Package, literary writing is referred to as imaginative writing.

Key Components

These key components are included for each type of writing at each grade level.

Rating Scale. This is the full version of the performance standards, with the four performance levels described in detail.



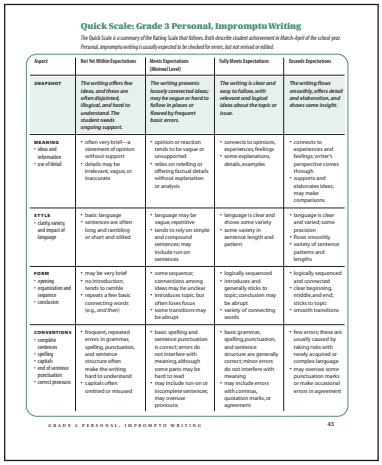
Rating Scale: Grade 3 Personal, Impromptu Writing

*Student achievement in personal, impromptu writing by March–April of Grade 3 can generally be described as shown in this scale.**

Personal, impromptu writing is not intended for an audience beyond the teacher. It is usually expected to be checked, but not revised or edited.

Aspect	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
SNAPSHOT	*The writing offers few ideas, and these are often disjointed, illogical, and hard to understand. The student needs ongoing support.*	*The writing presents loosely connected ideas; may be vague or hard to follow in places or flawed by frequent basic errors.*	*The writing is clear and easy to follow, with relevant and logical ideas about the topic or issue.*	*The writing flows smoothly, offers detail and elaboration, and shows some insight.*
MEANING • ideas and information • use of detail	• often very brief—a statement of opinion without support • little explanation; details may be irrelevant, vague, or inaccurate	• opinion or reaction tends to be vague or unsupported • often relies on retelling or offering factual details without explanation or analysis	• makes connections to personal experiences, feelings, and opinions; may focus on retelling the experience rather than reacting or analyzing • provides some explanations, details, and examples; may include irrelevant information in places	• makes connections to personal experiences and feelings; personality and views of the writer come through • supports and elaborates ideas with explanations, details, and examples; may draw comparisons with other situations
STYLE • clarity, variety, and impact of language	• basic, simple language • may be a series of short, stilted sentences or one or more long, rambling sentence	• language may be somewhat vague and repetitive • tends to rely on simple and compound sentences (sometimes may run on or be incomplete)	• language is clear and shows some variety • some variety in sentence length and pattern	• language is clear and varied; may try to be precise in places to show emphasis or make ideas clear • flows smoothly, with a variety of sentence patterns and lengths
FORM • opening • organization and sequence • conclusion	• may be very brief • may have no opening or introduction • tends to ramble without clear sequence or connections • repeats the same connecting words (e.g., *and then*)	• shows some attention to sequence; connections among ideas may be unclear in places • usually introduces the topic or issue • often loses focus; may ramble in places • may omit connecting words in places, which causes abrupt transitions	• ideas are generally logically sequenced, although there may be some breaks; connections may not always be clear • topic or issue is introduced in the beginning; the end may seem abrupt • generally sticks to the topic; may wander occasionally • uses a variety of connecting words	• ideas are logically connected and sequenced, although there may be some breaks where a new idea or point is introduced • writing flows smoothly through beginning, middle, and end • focused; sticks to the topic • transitions are smooth
CONVENTIONS • complete sentences • spelling • capitals • end of sentence punctuation • correct pronouns	• frequent, repeated errors make the writing hard to understand • many incomplete or run-on sentences • simple, familiar words may be misspelled • capitals and periods often omitted or misused • pronouns are often confusing	• may include several errors, but these do not interfere with basic meaning • may include some run-on or incomplete sentences • most simple, familiar words are spelled correctly • uses capitals and periods correctly; may overuse exclamation marks • may overuse pronouns in places	• may include some errors, but these do not interfere with meaning • most sentences are complete • most familiar words are spelled correctly, including capitals and apostrophes • basic sentence punctuation is correct; the student may make errors when using commas or quotation marks • most pronouns are clear and correct; may be some errors in agreement	• few errors; these do not interfere with meaning and are usually caused by taking risks with newly acquired or complex language • sentences are complete • most words are spelled correctly • basic sentence punctuation is correct, including dialogue; may overuse exclamation marks or commas • pronouns are clear and correct; may be occasional errors in agreement

* Student performance that falls within the wide range of expectations for Grade 3 by March–April generally matches the Level 3 descriptions in Evaluating Writing Across Curriculum.



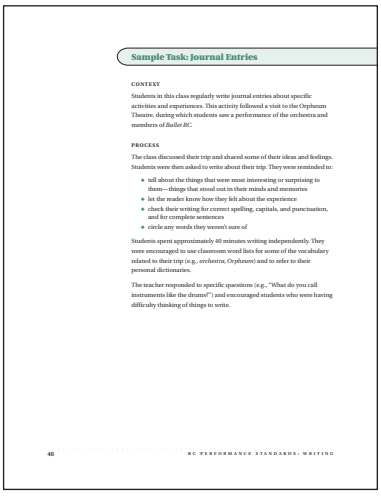
Quick Scale: Grade 3 Personal, Impromptu Writing

The Quick Scale is a summary of the Rating Scale that follows. Both describe student achievement in March–April of the school year. Personal, impromptu writing is usually expected to be checked for errors, but not revised or edited.

Aspect	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
SNAPSHOT	*The writing offers few ideas, and these are often disjointed, illogical, and hard to understand. The student needs ongoing support.*	*The writing presents loosely connected ideas; may be vague or hard to follow in places or flawed by frequent basic errors.*	*The writing is clear and easy to follow, with relevant and logical ideas about the topic or issue.*	*The writing flows smoothly, offers detail and elaboration, and shows some insight.*
MEANING • ideas and information • use of detail	• often very brief—a statement of opinion without support • details may be irrelevant, vague, or inaccurate	• opinion or reaction tends to be vague or unsupported • relies on retelling or offering factual details without explanation or analysis	• connects to opinions, experiences, feelings • some explanations, details, examples	• connects to experiences and feelings; writer's perspective comes through • supports and elaborates ideas; may make comparisons
STYLE • clarity, variety, and impact of language	• basic language • sentences are often long and rambling or short and stilted	• language may be vague, repetitive • tends to rely on simple and compound sentences; may include run-on sentences	• language is clear and shows some variety • some variety in sentence length and pattern	• language is clear and varied; some precision • flows smoothly • variety of sentence patterns and lengths
FORM • opening • organization and sequence • conclusion	• may be very brief • no introduction; tends to ramble • repeats a few basic connecting words (e.g., *and then*)	• some sequence; connections among ideas may be unclear • introduces topic, but often loses focus • some transitions may be abrupt	• logically sequenced • introduces and generally sticks to topic; conclusion may be abrupt • variety of connecting words	• logically sequenced and connected • clear beginning, middle, and end; sticks to topic • smooth transitions
CONVENTIONS • complete sentences • spelling • capitals • end of sentence punctuation • correct pronouns	• frequent, repeated errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure often make the writing hard to understand • capitals often omitted or misused	• basic spelling and sentence punctuation is correct; errors do not interfere with meaning, although some parts may be hard to read • may include run-on or incomplete sentences; may overuse pronouns	• basic grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure are generally correct; minor errors do not interfere with meaning • may include errors with commas, quotation marks, or agreement	• few errors; these are usually caused by taking risks with newly acquired or complex language • may overuse some punctuation marks or make occasional errors in agreement

Quick Scale. This is a short-form summary of the *Rating Scale*. *Quick Scales* are intended for daily use. Teachers may also want to share them with students and parents.

Sample Task. This is a task developed by practising teachers to provide opportunities to assess student work in the skill area. Each sample task includes examples of student work. Teachers may use the tasks as given or as models. Any tasks used should first be reviewed for issues sensitive to the class or community.



Sample Task: Journal Entries

CONTEXT

Students in this class regularly write journal entries about specific activities and experiences. This activity followed a visit to the Orpheum Theatre, during which students saw a performance of the orchestra and members of *Ballet BC*.

PROCESS

The class discussed their trip and shared some of their ideas and feelings. Students were then asked to write about their trip. They were reminded to:

- tell about the things that were most interesting or surprising to them—things that stood out in their minds and memories
- let the reader know how they felt about the experience
- check their writing for correct spelling, capitals, and punctuation, and for complete sentences
- circle any words they weren't sure of

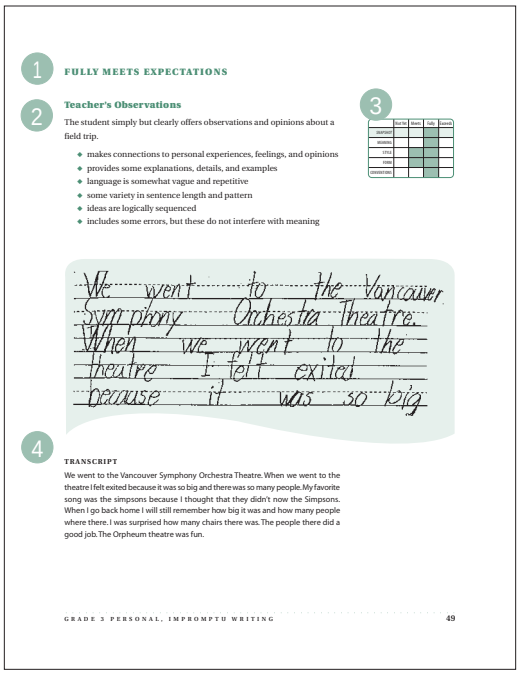
Students spent approximately 40 minutes writing independently. They were encouraged to use classroom word lists for some of the vocabulary related to their trip (e.g., *orchestra*, *Orpheum*) and to refer to their personal dictionaries.

The teacher responded to specific questions (e.g., "What do you call instruments like the drums?") and encouraged students who were having difficulty thinking of things to write.

Additional sample tasks, student work, and other support materials are available at the Ministry of Education's web site.

Student Samples

For each task there is one example of student work at each of the four levels.



1 FULLY MEETS EXPECTATIONS

2 **Teacher's Observations**

The student simply but clearly offers observations and opinions about a field trip.

- makes connections to personal experiences, feelings, and opinions
- provides some explanations, details, and examples
- language is somewhat vague and repetitive
- some variety in sentence length and pattern
- ideas are logically sequenced
- includes some errors, but these do not interfere with meaning

3

4 TRANSCRIPT

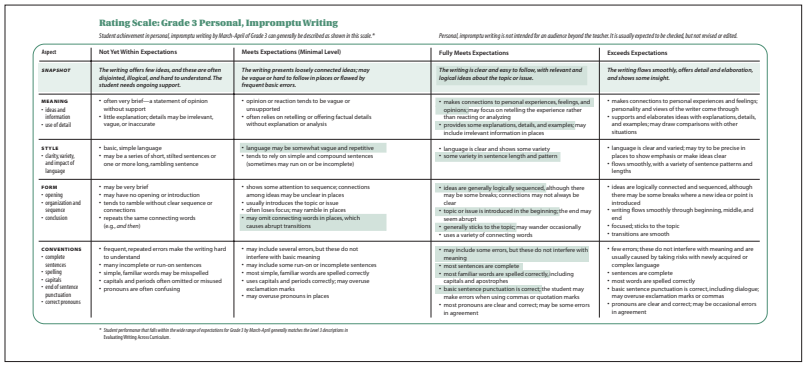
We went to the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra Theatre. When we went to the theatre I felt exited because it was so big and there was so many people. My favorite song was the simpsons because I thought that they didn't now the Simpsons. When I go back home I will still remember how big it was and how many people where there. I was surprised how many chairs there was. The people there did a good job. The Orpheum theatre was fun.

GRADE 3 PERSONAL, IMPROMPTU WRITING 49

1 **Level of Work.**

2 **Teacher's Observations.** These are additional comments by the teacher and key relevant criteria from the *Rating Scale.*

3 **Rating Scale Icon.** This is a generalized summary of the scale completed by the teacher. Here is how the actual scale looks for this sample:



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SNAPSHOT	*The writing offers few ideas, and those are often disjointed, illogical, and hard to understand. The student needs ongoing support.*	*The writing presents loosely connected ideas; may be vague or hard to follow in places or flawed by frequent basic errors.*	*The writing is clear and easy to follow, with relevant and logical ideas about the topic or issue.*	*The writing flows smoothly, offers detail and elaboration, and shows some insight.*
MEANING • ideas and information • use of detail	• often very brief—a statement of opinion without support • little explanation; details may be irrelevant, vague, or inaccurate	• opinion or reaction tends to be vague or unsupported • often relies on retelling or offering factual details without explanation or analysis	• makes connections to personal experiences, feelings, and opinions; may focus on retelling the experience rather than reacting or analyzing • provides some explanations, details, and examples; may include irrelevant information in places	• makes connections to personal experiences and feelings; personality and views of the writer come through • supports and elaborates ideas with explanations, details, and examples; may draw comparisons with other situations
STYLE • clarity, variety, and impact of language	• basic, simple language • may be a series of short, stilted sentences or one or more long, rambling sentence	• language may be somewhat vague and repetitive • tends to rely on simple and compound sentences (sometimes may run on or be incomplete)	• language is clear and shows some variety • some variety in sentence length and pattern	• language is clear and varied; may try to be precise in places to show emphasis or make ideas clear • flows smoothly, with a variety of sentence patterns and lengths
FORM • opening • organization and sequence • conclusion	• may be very brief • may have no opening or introduction • tends to ramble without clear sequence or connections • repeats the same connecting words (e.g., *and then*)	• shows some attention to sequence; connections among ideas may be unclear in places • usually introduces the topic or issue • often loses focus; may ramble in places • may omit connecting words in places, which causes abrupt transitions	• ideas are generally logically sequenced, although there may be some breaks; connections may not always be clear • topic or issue is introduced in the beginning; the end may seem abrupt • generally sticks to the topic; may wander occasionally • uses a variety of connecting words	• ideas are logically connected and sequenced, although there may be some breaks where a new idea or point is introduced • writing flows smoothly through beginning, middle, and end • focused; sticks to the topic • transitions are smooth
CONVENTIONS • complete sentences • spelling • capitals • end of sentence punctuation • correct pronouns	• frequent, repeated errors make the writing hard to understand • many incomplete or run-on sentences • simple, familiar words may be misspelled • capitals and periods often omitted or misused • pronouns are often confusing	• may include several errors, but these do not interfere with basic meaning • may include some run-on or incomplete sentences • most simple, familiar words are spelled correctly • uses capitals and periods correctly; may overuse exclamation marks • may overuse pronouns in places	• may include some errors, but these do not interfere with meaning • most sentences are complete • most familiar words are spelled correctly, including capitals and apostrophes • basic sentence punctuation is correct; the student may make errors when using commas or quotation marks • most pronouns are clear and correct; may be some errors in agreement	• few errors; these do not interfere with meaning and are usually caused by taking risks with newly acquired or complex language • sentences are complete • most words are spelled correctly • basic sentence punctuation is correct, including dialogue; may overuse exclamation marks or commas • pronouns are clear and correct; may be occasional errors in agreement

* Student performance that falls within the wide range of expectations for Grade 3 by March–April generally matches the Level 3 descriptions in *Evaluating Writing Across Curriculum.*

4 **Student Work.** This shows either a reproduction of the student's work or a portion of the student's original and a transcript of the entire piece. (Names of students and teachers have been changed where this information could be used to identify individuals.)