“What does good student writing at this grade level look like?”

The answer lies in the writing itself.

The Writing Standards in Action Project uses high quality student writing samples to illustrate what performance to grade level standards looks like—in action.

Grade 6
English Language Arts

Opinion /Argument
(Persuasive Essay)

Homelessness Essay—
The World of Hobos
Writing Sample Title:
Homelessness Essay—The World of Hobos

Text Type and Purpose: Opinion/Argument
Grade level/Content area: Grade 6 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Persuasive Essay
Standards Addressed: (W.6.1), (W.6.4), (L.6.2), (L.6.3), (L.6.5)
See descriptions of these standards in the right column of the next page.

Highlights:
This sample of student work meets grade level standards. It demonstrates the following attributes of effective writing.
The sample:
• Introduces an empathetic claim, contextualized in a vivid and empathetic manner
• Elaborates on the claim with clear, convincing reasoning and evidence
• Creates with a variety of linking words, phrases, and clauses a logical, cohesive progression of ideas
• Establishes and maintains an effective style
• Makes strategic use of precise language to express ideas concisely
• Varies sentence patterns to enhance style
• Uses words and phrases to indicate an enthusiastic tone
• Provides a strong conclusion that reinforces the claim with figurative language

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY
The student writing sample that follows includes standards-based commentary. The commentary found in this column describes how the writing meets the standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2011) and other content frameworks when applicable.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary
1. Grade-specific standards addressed are:
• Listed in the column to the right of student work by strand, grade, and number (or number and letter, where applicable)
• Marked by a colored block with a letter code, also in the column to the right of student work
EXAMPLE: A

2. Colored arrow blocks beneath each standard in the right column:
• Are of the same color and letter code as the block that marks the standard being addressed
• Mark standards-based commentary related to the standard being addressed
• Appear in alphabetical order
EXAMPLE: A1

3. Corresponding colored arrow blocks within the text:
• Set off sections of student work to which commentary applies
• Do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order—but where evidence of a particular standard exists
EXAMPLE: (begin) A1 section A1 (end)
Instructional Practices:
The teacher used the following practices:
• Classroom analysis of exemplars to demonstrate features of effective opinion/argument writing
• Modeling of various organizational possibilities
• Frequent teacher/student interaction at each step of the writing process

Assignment Description:
Students were asked to propose a solution to a local, state, or national problem. Relying on personal experience, they were to convince readers of the serious nature of the problem and the practicality of the solution.

Intended Audience:
Teacher, peers

Time:
4 class periods

Writing Process:
Alone; in class; pre-writing; organizing; drafting; revising; self-editing; peer-editing/peer response; teacher feedback

Materials:
Exemplars, graphic organizers, persuasion map, teacher-made handouts, language arts text

Writing Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 1 (W.6.1)
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
EXAMPLE:

Writing Standards:
Grade 6, Standard 4 (W.6.4)
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
EXAMPLE:

Language Standards
Grade 6, Standard 2 (L.6.2)
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
EXAMPLE:

Language Standards
Grade 6, Standard 3 (L.6.3)
Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
EXAMPLE:

Language Standards
Grade 6, Standard 5 (L.6.5)
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
EXAMPLE:

Please note:
The samples may contain inaccuracies in wording and content or shortcomings in the use of standard English conventions.
In this sample...

The writer argues in favor of increasing the number of homeless shelters in Boston. A logical progression of ideas incorporates convincing reasoning and evidence, made cohesive with a variety of transitional elements. Precise language and varied sentence types clarify complex ideas and create a consistent style and tone that reflect empathy for the homeless and enthusiasm for the claim. The essay concludes with figurative language that crystallizes the argument, giving it added impact. Notwithstanding somewhat formulaic organization, this sample is an effective effort at persuading the reader of the wisdom the writer’s claim.

Homelessness Essay

The World of Hobos

Hobos! Your first thought would probably be “Say, What?” or “Wah?”. Then you might be imagining what a hobo might be like. Some people may think of them as broke bums who stay behind a Dunkin’ Donuts or in front of a 7-11. Others may think hobos as awesome and cuddly people who are there for our entertainment, begging for cash. The reality is that they’re really people like you and me, misunderstood and treated unfairly by society.
who stay behind a Dunkin’ Donuts or in front of a 7-11. Others may think hobos as awesome and cuddly people who are there for our entertainment, begging for cash. The reality is that they’re really people like you and me, misunderstood and treated unfairly by society. One simple thing to solve this is to create more homeless shelters in Boston. Little do you know that it could create less crime, provide jobs for many, and how we could all easily become homeless in a second.
Now, I know you are probably wondering what crime has to do with a homeless shelter. The truth is that like any person, homeless people can get fed up with asking for money and can resort to more desperate measures. Valuables and food can be stolen for money or survival. So, like any robbery, police will have to respond which can distract them from doing other important things. Shelters come in to this because when people are taken in, they are usually supplied with most things needed for living, such as a bed and food. This means that there is less need for hobos or the homeless to steal necessities.
Another cause of crime increase and people being homeless is because of job loss. When people see tattered clothed, homeless people, folks can usually jump to thinking that they were just fools that gambled too much (even I used to think that). If you think about it, though, what the Massachusetts economy is like, it would not be surprising for someone to lose a job. This can force someone to sell or just lose their house completely. However, with more shelters, it gives these people somewhere to go where they can start small jobs to save money and get back on their feet.

Writing, Grade 6, Standard 1 (continued)

B2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer’s straightforward progression of ideas leads to several conclusions to buttress the overarching argument. (This means that there is less need for hobos or the homeless to steal necessities... However, with more shelters, it gives these people somewhere to go where they can start small jobs to save money and get back on their feet... The situation could even lead to illness and with no money, little kids can die if left with an untreated illness.).

C W.6.1.c

Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.

C1 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8

The writer creates cohesion within paragraphs with a variety of transitional elements. (Then you might be imagining... One simple thing to solve this is... So, like any robbery... Shelters come in to this because... This means that... If you think about it, though... However, with more shelters..., or...).

C2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer provides a variety of transitions from one paragraph to the next by referring to relevant ideas from the introduction. (Now, I know you are probably wondering what crime has to do with a homeless shelter... Another cause of crime increase and people being homeless is because of job loss... What I’m talking about is you, yourself, and how we could all be homeless in a second... So, this would be why and how shelters can benefit you...).
Still, after all this, we've been talking about other people, but what about right now. What I'm talking about is you, yourself, and how we could all be homeless in a second. Plus, adults, what if you had children? Sure, I bet a fully-grown adult would know how to take care of themselves for a while on the street, but a child or a baby would have no means to keep themselves warm or know how to search for food. The situation could even lead to illness and with no money, little kids can die if left with an untreated illness.

Writing. Grade 6, Standard 1 (continued)

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

D Examples: 1

The strong concluding statement refers to broad contours of the argument that encapsulate it and reinforce a dramatic call to action (So, this would be why and how shelters can benefit you, and maybe next time you see someone out, homeless, on the street, you might realize that could someday be a neighbor, a friend, or you! Even now, while you're reading this, a shelter in the world could be helping someone get their life back. So, what are you waiting for? Now that you know about these reasons, you can try help make more shelters in Boston and give more people a chance. For all you know, you could be helping someone that could be the world's next Bill Gates!).

begin section end
So, this would be why and how shelters can benefit you, and maybe next time you see someone out, homeless, on the street, you might realize that could someday be a neighbor, a friend, or you! Even now, while you’re reading this, a shelter in the world could be helping someone get their life back. So, what are you waiting for? Now that you know about these reasons, you can try help make more shelters in Boston and give more people a chance. For all you know, you could be helping someone that could be the world’s next Bill Gates!
Language. Grade 6, Standard 3

G L.6.3.a
Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.

G Examples: 1 2 3 4

The writer uses a variety of sentence types to clarify ideas and enhance reader interest (The reality is that they’re really people like you and me, misunderstood and treated unfairly by society... Valuables and food can be stolen for money or survival... This can force someone to sell or just lose their house completely... Even now, while you’re reading this, a shelter in the world could be helping someone get their life back. So, what are you waiting for?).

H L.6.3.b
Maintain consistency in style and tone.

H Examples: 1 2 3 4 5

The writer makes purposeful use of appropriate words and phrases to indicate an enthusiastic tone (Little do you know... The truth is... Still, after all this... So, what are you waiting for...? For all you know...).

Language. Grade 6, Standard 5

I L.6.5
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

I Examples: 1

The writer heightens the effect of the argument by concluding it with a meaningful allusion to a well-known contemporary figure (Hector Street – the long divide... Outward a... you could be helping someone that could be the world’s next Bill Gates!).