“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 3
English Language Arts

Inform/Explain
(Informational Essay)

The Fort
Writing Sample Title:
The Fort

Text Type and Purpose: Inform/Explain
Grade level/Content area: Grade 3 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Informational Essay
Standards Addressed: (W.3.2), (W.3.4), (L.3.1), (L.3.3)

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:
- Includes a clear introduction and conclusion
- Has a clear and logical structure
- Provides varied reasons to support the stated opinion
- Incorporates details, examples, and imagery in support of reasons
- Demonstrates effective use of a variety of sentence types

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
   - Examples:
     - 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
   - Examples:
     - 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
   - Examples: (begin) A1 section A1 (end)
Instructional Practices:
The teacher used the following practices:
  • Mini-lessons within a writing workshop format
  • Use of a graphic organizer

Assignment Description:
Students engaged in a writing workshop to write an informational essay on the teacher-supplied topic that asked students to describe their favorite place.

Intended Audience:
Teacher, classmates, and school community (by means of a display)

Time:
Several class periods

Writing Process:
Alone; in class; pre-writing; organizing; drafting; revising; self-editing; teacher feedback; teacher-student conference; publishing

Materials:
Graphic organizer; chart paper for brainstorming ideas; several teaching publications for reference

Writing Standards:
Grade 3, Standard 3 (W.3.2)
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
EXAMPLES: A B C D

Writing Standards:
Grade 3, Standard 4 (W.3.4)
With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
EXAMPLES: E

Language Standards:
Grade 3, Standard 1 (L.3.1)
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
EXAMPLES: F G

Language Standards:
Grade 3, Standard 3 (L.3.3)
Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
EXAMPLES: H

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

My favorite place is my fort. I love hiding in my fort and having secret meetings. The sunset looks beautiful from my fort. It's fun to make snowballs and hit my friends.

Writing. Grade 3, Standard 2:

W.3.2.a

Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

The writer presents three reasons for the choice of topic. The requirements of the graphic organizer contribute to a somewhat formulaic approach to topic development. Next steps for an additional revision of this sample could include more choice in the number of reasons offered as well as further development of those selected.

A1 examples: 1

The writer introduces a topic (My favorite place is my fort.).

A2 examples: 1
My fort is in a secret spot on top of some rocks near (name of park). It is fun to hide in my fort and have top secret meetings. (Name of friend), my friend, and I talk about exploring my yard and finding interesting objects like creepy bugs.

Watching the golden sunsets is easy because I'm on a hill. The clouds turn purple and pink like pearls. I marvel at the sun when it turns yellow, orange, and then goes down.

Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.

The writer develops each reason with clear details and examples.

The clouds turn purple and pink like pearls. I marvel at the sun when it turns yellow, orange, and then goes down… Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.

The writer makes explicit connections between reasons presented in the introduction and examples that develop each one.
Once, (name of friend) came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.

If I’m either having meetings, watching the sunset, or getting soaked in a snowball fight, I’m always having fun.

My fort is my most favorite place in the world!
Writing. Grade 3, Standard 4:

**E**  W.3.4

With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

**E1** E1 Examples:  1 · 2 · 3

The writer develops the chosen topic logically with clear details and brief examples (It is fun to hide in my fort and have top secret meetings. [Name of friend], my friend, and I talk about exploring my yard and finding interesting objects like creepy bugs... Watching the golden sunsets is easy because I’m on a hill. The clouds turn purple and pink like pearls. I marvel at the sun when it turns yellow, orange, and then goes down... My fort is a great place to hide. Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.).

**E2** Overall text reference

The writer follows the repetitive structure of a graphic organizer. This makes the sample’s logical organization and development somewhat predictable and formulaic. As noted before, next steps for an additional revision of this sample could include more choice in the number of reasons offered as well as further development of those selected.

*Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.*
**Language. Grade 3, Standard 1:**

**F. L.3.1.e**

Form and use the simple verb tenses.

**F Examples:** 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer correctly uses simple present and past tenses (I love hiding… [name of friend], my friend, and I talk… The clouds turn purple… Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection.).

**G. L.3.1.i**

Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.

**G Examples:** 1

The writer forms a variety of sentences: complex, compound, and simple (Once, [name of friend] came over and we had a humongous snowball fight. I hid in my fort for protection. While I was in my fort, I was making snowballs to throw at him.).

**Language. Grade 3, Standard 3:**

**H. L.3.3.a**

Choose words and phrases for effect.

**H1 Examples:** 1 · 2

The writer chooses sensory words to describe the sunset effectively (golden sunsets… when it turns yellow, orange…).

**H2 Examples:** 1

The writer makes use of a cleverly crafted and placed simile (The clouds turn purple and pink like pearls.).