# **OPTIC: Online Platform for Teaching and Informed Calibration**

**HOW TO:** *Use OPTIC to Study Local Samples of Student Writing*

Educators can use OPTIC to collaboratively study local student writing samples in relation to grade-specific learning standards, capture takeaways from the assessment of the writing sample, and provide suggestions for instructional strategies or shifts a teacher might implement in response to the student’s work. After completing the OPTIC task individually, educators can come together virtually or in-person to calibrate on their assessment of standards-aligned writing, key takeaways, and instructional next steps in a professional learning community (PLC), team meeting, or other professional learning space.

For more detailed instructions, please visit the [OPTIC resources page](http://www.ma-optic.com/resources/). For more information or support with using OPTIC, please contact educatordevelopment@doe.mass.edu.

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| **1. Prepare the student writing sample.**  |
| * Save a copy of the student writing sample to your computer.
* If you plan to make the student writing sample public to all OPTIC users, ensure that content is appropriately anonymized.
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| **2. Upload the student writing sample to the OPTIC platform.** |
| * From the main menu, select My Stuff, click the (+) icon, and select Upload a File. Follow the prompts to find, open, and add the student writing sample.
* Repeat those steps to add the writing assignment, lesson plan, or other artifacts that would provide context or supplemental information to someone reviewing this writing sample. Note: Your file will be automatically uploaded as “private,” meaning that the student writing sample is not accessible to others using the platform unless you share it with them. If you’d like to allow this student writing sample to be accessible to all other OPTIC users statewide to use in their own calibration tasks, change the sharing setting to “Shared with all users across MA | OPTIC.”
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| **3. Create an OPTIC task.** |
| * From My Stuff, click the (+) icon and select Create a Calibration Task.
* Choose Practice or Training Task and enter a title (e.g., “Writing Topic\_Student 1”).
* Provide instructions for your colleagues, including a brief description of the writing assignment or prompt and the learning standard(s) on which they should focus their review and feedback.
* (Optional) Click Add Reference Material to upload any supplemental artifacts to be included (e.g. writing assignment or lesson plan).
* Click Add Calibration Resources to upload the student writing sample from My Files.
* Go to Select Scoring and click Add scoring guide, select Shared SGs, and choose the Curriculum Framework relevant to your student writing sample (e.g., ELA – Grade 1).
* Click the blue Change link to Clear All checked standards. Re-select only those applicable to your student writing sample (e.g., RL.1.04).
* Click Add a Feedback Guide and choose the Student Writing Sample Reflection Prompts.
* Go to Set Properties. Copy and paste your instructions for your colleagues into the Description text box and select your grade level(s) and subject area. Leave the task as “private” unless you intend to share it with all users of the platform.
* Click Publish to finalize your task. Note that the task cannot be edited or deleted once it is published.
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| **4. Share the task with your colleagues.** |
| * From My Stuff, click the (+) icon and select Manage Groups. Click on (+) again to create a group. Add anyone who will be studying the student writing sample to the group. Doing so will automatically send them an email invitation.
* From Calibration, click the (+) icon and select Assign a Calibration Task.
* Click Select a Calibration Task to locate the task you created. Set a due date.
* Go to Pick a Group and Members to select the group and individual(s) who will be studying the student writing sample. Click Assign. This will send an invitation to the assignee(s) to complete your task.
* You can monitor when your colleagues have completed the task by going to the Calibration page, opening the task, and clicking the Assignees tab.
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| **5. Calibrate on your group’s** **assessment of standards-aligned writing, key takeaways, and instructional next steps.**  |
| * Once your colleagues have studied the student writing sample, you can collectively review the task by clicking View Results.
* Review the group’s assessment of the student writing sample in relation to grade-specific learning standards. Collectively look at the first screen, which shows the group’s assessment of the extent to which the student writing sample is at, above, or below each grade level standards. Consider using the following discussion questions:
	+ What evidence did our group use to arrive at our assessment of standards-aligned student writing?
	+ Is there variation in our scores? Why? What are the implications of these variations in the way we interpret the quality of student writing?
* Review the group’s key takeaways and suggestions for instructional next steps. Collectively look at the group’s responses to the reflection prompts by clicking Feedback on the Results page. Consider using the following discussion questions:
	+ How calibrated was the team with regards to assessments of the writing sample’s strengths and areas of growth?
	+ Based on the group’s responses, what is the most effective instructional strategy (or strategies) that a teacher can use to address the writing sample’s area of growth?

*For additional support with facilitating an OPTIC calibration workshop, please see the* [*Student Writing Sample Workshop Facilitator’s Guide*](http://www.ma-optic.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/OPTIC-Student-Writing-Sample-Workshop-Facilitators-Guide.pdf)*.* |