

“What should 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.

Writing Standards *in Action*

Grade 4 English Language Arts

Opinion / Argument (*Opinion Essay*)

Outdoor Recess... Required!



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION



Background Information

GRADE
4

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

Writing Sample Title:

Outdoor Recess...Required!

Text Type and Purpose: Opinion/Argument
Grade level/Content area: Grade 4 English Language Arts
Type of Assignment: Opinion Essay
Standards Addressed: (W.4.1), (W.4.4), (L.4.1), (L.4.2), (L.4.3)
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:

- Establishes a clear position and also acknowledges an opposing position
- Provides purposefully organized reasons and details to support the opinion
- Uses effective transitions
- Employs language strategically to make support for the stated opinion clear and compelling
- Establishes and maintains a formal style consistent with the intended audience and with the purpose for writing
- Includes well-crafted sentences of varying lengths and types

CONTINUED ►



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 (2017)* 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:

- Instruction in the writing process
- Feedback by means of an analytical opinion/argument writing rubric
- In-class activities to practice categorizing fact and opinion statements
- Discussion of a local newspaper’s editorial page

Assignment Description:

The teacher asked students to respond to the following prompt: Should outdoor recess be required for students in elementary school? State your opinion and support your position with reasons.

Intended Audience:

Readers of the editorial page of the local newspaper, teacher, peers

Time:

4 class periods

Writing Process:

Alone; with a partner; in class; pre-writing; organizing; drafting; revising; self-editing; peer-editing/peer response; teacher feedback

Materials:

Graphic organizer, example editorials from local newspaper, analytical opinion/argument writing rubric

Writing Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 1 (W.4.1)**

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

EXAMPLE: **A B C D**

Writing Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 4 (W.4.4)**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

EXAMPLE: **E**

Language Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 1 (L.4.1)**

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking; retain and further develop language skills learned in previous grades.

EXAMPLE: **F**

Language Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 2 (L.4.2)**

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

EXAMPLE: **G**

Language Standards:**Grade 4, Standard 3 (L.4.3)**

Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

EXAMPLE: **H**

Please note:

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

END OF BACKGROUND ■



Opinion/Argument

GRADE
4

FRAMEWORK / CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Massachusetts Curriculum Framework
for ELA and Literacy (2017)

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

In this sample...

The writer states a clear opinion and acknowledges the opposing point of view. Several plausible reasons, each developed with relevant details and examples, advance the writer's persuasive purpose. Precise language, pertinent personal anecdotes, and mostly effective transitions impart a logical framework and emotional appeal that further enhance the sample's persuasive effect. Notwithstanding its somewhat formulaic organization, the sample is an effective effort at persuading the reader that outdoor recess should be required for elementary students.

Understanding the Standards-Based Commentary

The student writing sample that begins on this page includes in this column standards-based commentary describing how the writing meets the standards in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (2017)* and other content frameworks, when applicable. Where they apply, sub-standards marked by letters are included.

Evidence for the commentary is noted in the text of the student writing using color-coded, numbered 'begin' and 'end' arrows.

For example:

A1 marks the beginning and **A1** marks the end of the relevant section in the text.

Please note that the labeled arrows in the text do not necessarily appear in alphabetical order.

Outdoor Recess... Required!

A1 Outdoor recess **H1** should not be an option **H1** for elementary students. **A1** One reason why kids **H1** should be required **H1** to have outdoor recess is because it teaches teamwork. Another reason why kids should have outdoor recess is because you

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 1:

A W.4.1.a

Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped in paragraphs and sections to support the writer's purpose.

A1 A1 Examples: 1 • 2

The writer introduces the topic by hinting at an alternate point of view (*Outdoor recess should not be an option for elementary students.*) and then stating a clear opinion (*In my opinion, elementary students should be required to have outdoor recess.*).

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 1:
(continued)**A2** A2 Examples: 1 · 2 · 3

The writer structures the essay purposefully around plausible, broad reasons that support the stated opinion. (*Teamwork is a very important skill for all kids to have... Another reason why outdoor recess is vital for elementary students is that it gives kids exercise and a lot of fresh air... My last reason why outdoor recess is crucial is because it teaches kids to socialize and make friends.*)

B W.4.1.b

Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

B B Examples: 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

The writer supports reasons with effective details and relevant examples, linked at times by awkward transitions (*When kids show teamwork, they usually include others. Kids help each other on teams when they play football or soccer, therefor showing teamwork... During outdoor recess you can get 25 minutes of fresh air! Also, exercise can make you stronger and help you maintain your weight. Football is a great example of exercise during outdoor recess. Exercise can also help you pay attention in class. This once happened to me, and I wasn't tired the rest of the day. Kindergarteners especilly need to get out, not just for exercise, but just to get their energy out... This also happened to me and I didn't have anybody to hang out with for 3 months... Kids who get picked on in class and at recess usually don't have anyone to talk to. But if kids make friends at recess, at least they have someone to talk to.*)

can get exercise and fresh air. The last reason why kids **H1** should

be required **H1** to have outdoor recess is because it educates kids

to make friends and socialize. **H1** **A1** In my opinion, **H1**

elementary students should be required to have outdoor recess. **A1**

C1 **A2** Teamwork is a very important skill for all kids to

have. **A2** **C1** **F** **B** When kids show teamwork, they usually

include others. **F** Kids help each other on teams when they play

football or soccer, **C2** therefor showing teamwork. **B** **C2**

Report cards have a catagorie called, “cooperating with peers”. If

teamwork is being showed during outdoor recess, it's a good way to

earn a good grade in that catagorie on a kid's report card.

C2 As you can see, **C2** there are many ways how outdoor recess

and teamwork are tied together.

begin section **end**

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES 



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

C1 **A2** Another reason **C1** why outdoor recess is **H2** vital **H2** for elementary students is that it gives kids exercise and a lot of fresh air. **A2** Since it's flu season, it's probably a good idea to let kids have fresh air. **B** During outdoor recess, you can get 25 minutes worth of fresh air! **C2** **F** Also, **C2** exercise can make you stronger and help you maintain your weight. **F** Football is a great example of exercise during outdoor recess. Exercise can also help you pay attention in class. This once happened to me, and I wasn't tired the rest of the day. Kindergarteners especially need to get out, not just for exercise, but just to get their energy out. **B** **C2** Last, **C2** the gym teacher would get more compliments on how fit we are due to outdoor recess. **H1** Clearly, **H1** if kids are exercising during outdoor recess, it should not be removed.

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►

**Writing. Grade 4, Standard 1:**
(continued)**C W.4.1.c**

Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., *for instance, in order to, in addition*).

C1 C1 Examples: 1 • 2 • 3

The writer uses repetition of a notion presented in a previous paragraph (*Teamwork is a very important skill for all kids to have.*) as well as common transitional phrases (*Another reason... My last reason...*) to link the stated opinion to supporting reasons.

C2 C2 Examples: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5

The writer uses transitional words and phrases to link ideas within paragraphs (*... therefore showing teamwork... As you can see... Also ...Last ... During outdoor recess...*).

D W.4.1.d

Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

D D Examples: 1

The writer provides an appropriate conclusion that asks for the reader's reaction and simply reiterates the stated opinion and the reasons for it (*Now how do you feel about indoor recess? As you can see, outdoor recess can benefit kids around the United States by teaching teamwork, giving kid exercise, and educating kids to socialize and make friends. In my opinion, outdoor recess should be required for elementary students.*).

STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

C1 **A2** My last reason **C1** why outdoor recess is **H2** crucial **H2** is because it teaches kids to socialize and make friends. **A2** Kids like to spend their time at recess playing with one another. But as they get older, they may find it harder to make new friends. **F** **B** This also happened to me and I didn't have anybody to hang out with for 3 months. **B** **F** **C2** During outdoor recess, **C2** other kids who have no one to play with usually would play with other kids who have no one to play with. But during indoor recess, kids do their own thing, just because they can. **B** Kids who get picked on in class and at recess usually don't have anyone to talk to. But if kids make friends at recess, at least they have someone to talk to. **B** Kids who don't like exercising would find

Writing. Grade 4, Standard 4:**E W.4.4**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

E **E Example: Overall Text Reference**

The writer demonstrates purposeful organization and develops the sample in a manner appropriate to an opinion piece and its intended audience.

Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.

Language. Grade 4, Standard 1:**F L.4.1.a**

Produce complete sentences, using knowledge of subject and predicate to recognize and correct inappropriate sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

F **F Examples: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4**

The writer creates well-crafted sentences of varying lengths and types that add clarity and enhance the persuasive effect of this sample (*When kids show teamwork, they usually include others... Also, exercise can make you stronger and help you maintain your weight... This also happened to me and I didn't have anybody to hang out with for 3 months... Now how do you feel about indoor recess?*).

begin section end

WRITING SAMPLE CONTINUES ►



STANDARDS-BASED COMMENTARY

it more appealing to exercise with others. **H1** Obviously **H1** if socializing is a major feature of outdoor recess, more friends can be made, and kids will be less lonely.

F **D** Now how do you feel about indoor recess? **F**

H1 As you can see, **H1** outdoor recess can benefit kids around the United States by teaching teamwork, giving kids exercise, and educating kids to socialize and make friends. In my opinion, outdoor recess should be required for elementary students. **D**

Language. Grade 4, Standard 2:**G L.4.2.e**

Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.

G G Example: Overall Text Reference

Overall, the writer's command of standard English spelling enhances the clarity of this sample although there are some errors in places.

Note: Comment refers to the piece as a whole rather than a specific example within the text.

Language. Grade 4, Standard 3:**H L.4.3.a**

Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.

H1 H1 Examples: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7

The writer chooses words and phrases that express ideas precisely and enhance the persuasive effect of the sample (...*should not be an option... should be required... In my opinion... clearly... obviously... As you can see...*).

H2 H2 Examples: 1 • 2

The writer chooses precise words to limit redundancy (*vital... crucial...*).

begin section **end**

END OF WRITING SAMPLE ■

