

Analyzing Student Writing Samples

This document will provide teachers with analyzed writing samples matching the nine stages of the FSD Writing Continuum.

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After the revised Frontier School Division Writing Continuum was published, feedback from teachers strongly indicated a need for student writing samples to match the various stages of the Writing Continuum. During the 2010/11 school year the Continua Learning Community comprised of ten teachers and the five ELA consultants worked on choosing and analyzing samples.

It must be noted that a writing sample from a student can only exemplify some of the student characteristics listed on the various stages of the Writing Continuum. Close observation of the student before, during and after writing is necessary because many of the student behaviors listed in the stages cannot be seen in that sample of writing. We have included authentic samples of student writing and for each sample we coded the particular stage of the writing continuum as follows:

P – This characteristic was evident by looking at the finished writing **product**.

C – This characteristic was evident by having a **conversation** with the student before, during, or after writing this sample.

O – This characteristic was evident by **observing** the student before, during, or after the writing.

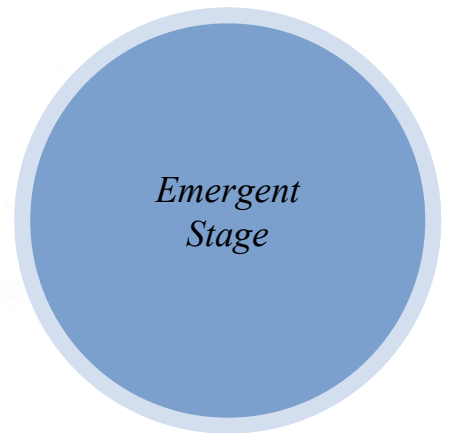
As the teacher, you will of course be coding the student's Writing Continuum with only a checkmark or a coding system that has been adopted at your particular school. The analyzed samples within this document attempt to show writing that extends over a variety of forms, for different audiences, and purposes. Because a particular form of writing may not be present at a particular stage of the continuum, we would encourage you to begin to gather your own student writing samples as either a classroom teacher or together with school colleagues to have more samples to use with students. It is worth noting that in the section of this website entitled "Writing Continua in Student/Parent Friendly Language" we have included even more student writing samples. These ones, however, have not been as thoroughly analyzed but they could serve as equipping you with even more authentic student writing samples.

Another important point to note is that sometimes students do not neatly fit into one stage of the Writing Continuum. As the student is acquiring new skills and practicing writing, it is possible that the student is displaying behavior from two or even three stages of the Writing Continuum. Collecting and keeping the writing of each of your students in a writing notebook, folder, or portfolio will allow you to ultimately look for ample evidence of a particular student behavior/descriptor. Seeing a descriptor at least three times will then allow you to record that as a consistently demonstrated behavior for that student.

co uh&isothrgr

I seen W.

I



Emergent	
<u>C</u>	Talks/shares personal experiences, feelings and ideas before writing
—	Connects symbols in environment to print and uses them in own writing
—	Writes (types) or attempts to write own name
<u>P</u>	Uses letters, numbers and symbols interchangeably and/or randomly on the page
<u>P</u>	Makes marks other than drawing
—	Recognizes and prints most letters of the alphabet
—	Writes initial letters for familiar words
<u>P</u>	Includes scribbles as symbols
<u>C</u>	Tells about own writing/drawing
—	Relies on pictures to convey meaning when telling about their “writing”
<u>C</u>	Asks questions for inquiry, to satisfy curiosity and for information needs
<u>O</u>	Responds to stories by actively listening/drawing/writing

Conversation

→ S: “I seen a big dog outside my house.
I was scared of the big dog.”

→ S: “I wrote about the big dog I seen.
He was furry.”

→ S: “How do I write ‘I’?”
S: “What do dogs eat?”

Observation

→ The teacher notices that the student draws a picture of a dog chasing a cat after she read a story with the same scenario.

Title of Writing Sample: (none) . . . starts with “co uh...” on first line and “I seen.” on the second line.

After School



I will do my work.
I will do my best.
I will read books.
I will be good.
I will ride my bike to school.
I will ride my bike.
We will do are best,
I love school
I love my dad.
The best thing I like to do is hunting
because I like hunting.

Early	
<u>P</u>	Experiments with own ideas
<u>P</u>	Recognizes difference among the concepts of a letter, number, and a word
—	Connects sound, letter, picture to meaning (uses one or two letters to represent a word)
—	Can copy familiar words using print from the classroom environment (for example: word walls)
<u>P</u>	Writes from left to right and top to bottom
<u>P</u>	Uses upper case letters randomly
<u>P</u>	Begins to use periods
<u>P</u>	Uses patterned sentences in stories
<u>P</u>	Attempts to write a few familiar words correctly
<u>Q</u>	Recognizes that print carries a message
—	Adds labels and details to stories and drawings
<u>P</u>	Uses print and pictures to convey meaning
<u>C</u>	Sees self as a writer, knows writing has meaning, can read own writing, but others may not be able to read it

Observation

The teacher observes the student noticing a sign on the library door and asks, “What does that say?”

Conversation

S: “I like to write about school; I am going to read this story to my little sister because she likes to do some of the same things.”

Title of Writing Sample: After School

Dinosaur girls Bully

Once upon a time there were Dinosaurs who Bullied all the time. They Pushed other Dinosaurs. They always Stamp on the ground and they will always be bad all the time.

The nice Dinosaurs treat others kindly and say hi and love others. They say goodbye when it time to go to school and they get bullied at school. They tell the teacher and they get sent to the office.

the End



Developing
Stage

Developing	
<u>Q</u>	Takes greater risks expressing their own ideas in writing
<u>P</u>	Uses or attempts to use unfamiliar words
<u>P</u>	Writes words with spaces between them
<u>C</u>	Uses words in writing that they have learned in other contexts, e.g., uses words from shared reading
<u>P</u>	Uses beginning, middle, and end sounds to make words
<u>P</u>	Forms all letters legibly, upper and lower case, whether writing or using the keyboard
<u>P</u>	Constructs simple complete sentences
<u>—</u>	Begins to use capitalization, including I, their name, beginnings of sentences
<u>—</u>	Begins to use punctuation, including periods (.) and question marks (?)
<u>P</u>	Begins to write familiar words correctly
<u>P</u>	Writes pieces with beginning, middle, and end
<u>—</u>	Represents information in categories according to similarities, differences, and sequence
<u>P</u>	Writes pieces that make sense to self and others

Observation

Teacher observes that this piece of writing demonstrates no use of patterned sentences and the student's writing is more creative and goes beyond the student's usual responses about their own experiences.

Conversation

S: "I used the word 'stomp' because I learned that dinosaurs stomp from the story you read yesterday."

Title of Writing Sample: Dinosaur Girls Bully

The Vanishing Teacher

If school had a teacher you can hear but cannot see, I would think that it would be fantastic!! And even when all the kids would see her glasses dangling up in the air. Guess what the kid would do is laugh! But then it would be so sad because every day we wouldn't be able to see her happy and smile every day. Then the classroom would not see her and there wouldn't be no fun at all. They would even bang into her because they can't see her. And at the room 204 the would never ever believe there eyes everyday. Then the kids in 204 would have a story to tell their mothers. Even the mothers would have a story to tell the principal. Then the principal would talk to the teacher and fire her. The kids in 204 had another story to tell and now they don't have to come to school. And even now the mother tell the kids. You little kids have to go to school because you need to learn the small steps before you take the big steps.



*Transitional
Stage*

Observation

Transitional	
<u>O</u>	Develops and arranges ideas using pre-established organizers, such as story maps and planners with guidance
<u>O</u>	Includes ideas/information from other sources in own words
<u>—</u>	Uses a variety of forms for particular audiences and purposes, such as letters, narratives, poetry, reports and other expository writing with guidance
<u>P</u>	Uses phonetic spelling to write unfamiliar words independently
<u>P</u>	Writes familiar words correctly
<u>C</u>	Composes complete sentences with more detail by adding detail with guidance
<u>P</u>	Expands use of punctuation such as commas in a series, apostrophes, and quotation marks with guidance
<u>—</u>	Expands use of capitalization to include days of the week, months and most proper nouns
<u>P</u>	Edits for complete sentences including end punctuation
<u>—</u>	Begins to use basic transition words with guidance
<u>P</u>	Composes pieces with clear beginning, middle, and end independently
<u>C</u>	Sets goals based on feedback with guidance

Student uses brainstorming and story maps during pre-writing.

Students use books, peers, encyclopedias, computer, word wall, etc.

Conversation

T: "How would you feel if you walked into class and just saw my glasses dangling in the air?"

S: "Well I think that would be fantastic!"

T: "What do you think is going to happen next?"

S: "I think the teacher is going to be in trouble."

T: "What happens to the teacher?"

S: "She gets fired."

T: "What happens to the students?"

S: "We are sad because she is gone and we are happy because we have no teacher."

T: "How can you make the story more interesting?"

S: "Well, I can use more describing words."

Title of Writing Sample: The Vanishing Teacher

Guitars

I think guitars are the best instruments because they're easy to play. My best cousin Stanly Voss and I learned at the same time. Now we know over 70 songs.

Guitars can plug into an amplifier and you can alter the way it sounds when it's on overdrive. I also think they're the best because they sound clear.

You can also strum, pick, hammer on, pull off and you can slide. I was 9 years old when I started playing. Once I learned one song I got addicted to playing. That's why I think guitars are the best instruments.



*Expanding
Stage*

Expanding	
<u>C</u>	Considers audience, purpose, and form with guidance
<u>—</u>	Uses a variety of pre-writing strategies such as webs, charts, lists, graphs, maps independently
<u>P</u>	Composes more complex sentences using conjunctions and sentence combining with guidance
<u>O</u>	Shares writing and begins to use feedback to improve writing
<u>O</u>	Offers feedback on writing using pre-established criteria
<u>C</u>	Revises by expanding descriptions using adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases
<u>O</u>	Begins to edit for spelling using word walls, dictionaries, spell check, online resources, etc. with guidance
<u>—</u>	Edits for commas in a series, apostrophes, quotation marks, and more sophisticated uses of capitalization with guidance
<u>O</u>	Recognizes the importance of reflection in writing with guidance
<u>O</u>	Reflects on writing using pre-established criteria
<u>C</u>	Sets goals based on reflection with guidance

Observation

Teacher notices student peer-conferencing.

Teacher notices the student looking at a chart that provides criteria and telling another student to re-examine one part.

Teacher sees student checking spelling using a word wall.

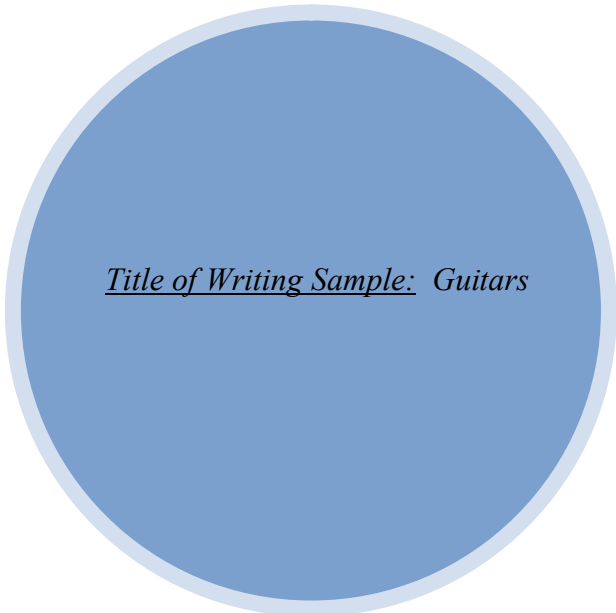
Teacher sees student rereading writing and saying, "Now it makes sense when I write it that way."

Conversation

T: "Who are you writing this for?"
S: "For my cousin who told me all about guitars."

T: "Can you describe how you use a guitar?"
S: "You strum, pick, hammer on, pull off, and you can slide. You can plug it into an amplifier."

T: "How do we organize the information for a polished copy?"
S: "Well, I could use paragraphs."



Comedies

Movies are entertaining to watch. There are numerous kinds of movies; the main ones being comedies and action. The comedies are my personal all-time favorite.

Watching an excellent movie compels you to feel better. When I'm feeling down and out comedies make those worries just disappear.

Comedies, being my favorite, take a lot of stress off a person. When you're mad and need to unwind, put on a funny movie. You will find yourself too busy watching to remember why you were mad. Comedies are a lot more amusing than watching movie with a lot of brutal violence. You really don't want to see people getting killed.

You want to enjoy your movie and have a good laugh. Comedies seem to be the right medicine for you.



*Bridging
Stage*

Bridging	
<u>P</u>	Recognizes the relationship among audience, purpose and form
<u>—</u>	Asks questions to fill gaps in information
<u>P</u>	Includes an opening
<u>P</u>	Organizes ideas in logical sequence
<u>P</u>	Begins to use paragraphing
<u>—</u>	Eliminates unnecessary information (repetition of words and ideas) with guidance
<u>O</u>	Uses pre-determined criteria to revise during conferencing and reflection
<u>—</u>	Considers others' ideas for revision
<u>O</u>	Recognizes spelling errors in unfamiliar words and edits with guidance
<u>O</u>	Edits for capitalization, end punctuation, commas in series, and quotation marks
<u>P/C</u>	Uses relevant supporting details
<u>O/C</u>	Revises to expand ideas using supporting details or information with guidance
<u>P</u>	Creates voice by taking risks with word choice to evoke an emotional response
<u>C</u>	Identifies areas of success and sets goals for writing with guidance

Observation

The student refers to the pre-determined criteria or rubric for a standard five paragraph essay when talking with a peer during a conference.

The student is seen making changes to their writing by crossing out words and adding words on the draft. A dictionary is being referred to by the student.

Conversation

T: "Let's read this first paragraph together.
How could we make this opening clearer?"
S: "The second sentence may not be true . . . so maybe I should take it out?"

T: "Using the rubric, tell me what you like about your piece of writing."
S: "I tried to follow the plan. I've never written so much before."
T: "If we look at the next level on our continuum, use of transitions would improve your piece."
S: "What are transition words?"
T: "I'll help you with that in our next class."

Title of Writing Sample: Comedies

Watermelon Moon

Last night I saw the
Watermelon Moon
As round as a ball
As green as the grass
And it made me want
A snack

Mom tells me sleepy stories
About the seed craters
When its time for bed
So I can dream of life
On the Watermelon Moon



*Conventional
Stage*

Conventional	
<u>O</u>	Uses pre-writing strategies to guide the drafting process
<u>C</u>	Contributes ideas from self and other sources
<u>P</u>	Maintains a variety of given forms
<u>—</u>	Begins to write paragraphs with introductions and conclusions, supporting details, and a variety of sentence patterns.
<u>—</u>	Begins to use transition words appropriate for text structure and form.
<u>P</u>	Begins to use interesting language and literary devices.
<u>P/C</u>	Revises for specific writing traits (including ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and voice) with guidance
<u>C</u>	Asks questions relevant to main ideas and supporting details
<u>O</u>	Compares own and others' ideas during revision
<u>O</u>	Edits for correct verb use (subject/verb agreement, tense) and pronoun reference
<u>—</u>	Edits for conventional punctuation
<u>P</u>	Consistently applies spelling conventions to writing
<u>C</u>	Reflects on writing process and product with guidance

Observation
Student uses a graphic organizer to guide in the writing process.

She shares her poetry with others and talks about it.

In a previous draft she had experimented with all past tense verbs

Conversation

S: "I want to compare the watermelon to the moon."

T: "Well, how are they similar?"

T: "How are you going to pull together the idea of a watermelon, a snack, and the moon?"

S: "Does this make sense when I talk about seed craters?"

T: "What do you think of your poem?"

Student: "I enjoyed writing it. I think I did pretty well."

T: "What assisted you in getting your poem to this point?"

S: "I talked with other students, and we read a lot of poems in class."

Title of Writing Sample: Watermelon Moon



MY LAST FIGHT!

By: the slave Cassio

As I entered the Circus Maximus I heard the roar of the crowd and thought, today will be the day I gain my freedom.

The day was a public holiday and the emperor and provincial governors had arranged chariot races and violent games to amuse the people who were there. I was one of the slaves who had trained as a gladiator and I was ready to fight. I was wearing a Thracian helmet and the rest of my scanty clothing left parts of my body dangerously exposed. The gladiator beside me wore some protective armor. Another gladiator was naked and carried only a weighted net, a Neptune's trident used by tuna fishermen, and short sword.

In the theatre there were several pairs of Gladiators fighting. I lifted my heavy sword and shield and at the sound of the horn I attacked my opponent. I slashed my opponent's leg and cut him. He swung at me and cut my muscular arm. The crowd jeered. I swung again and as he fell to the ground I stabbed him in the stomach. The crowd roared. I was a star. I had won my freedom.

*Connecting
Stage*

Connecting	
—	Chooses pre-writing strategy appropriate to form/audience/purpose independently
P	Maintains form appropriate to audience and purpose
P	Uses openings to catch readers' attention and direct purpose
P	Uses strong conclusions
P	Uses a variety of sentences
P	Uses transitional devices to maintain flow of ideas
O	Revises for specific writing traits (ideas, word choice, sentence fluency, and voice) independently
C	Acknowledges the value of, and integrates others' ideas into own writing
O	Uses a variety of tools to edit for unfamiliar words (dictionaries, spell check, online resources, thesaurus, etc)
C	Reflects on stages of process
C	Reflects on product
—	Sets future goals in writing based on self-assessment of process and product using pre-determined criteria
P	Uses words, language and sentence variation to create sensory images and mood
—	Evaluates new information for completeness and relevance to audience and purpose using predetermined criteria

Observation

The student uses some of the 6 + 1 trait charts which list criteria. He then makes some visible changes on his first typed draft.

Spell check in Word and other online resources such as a thesaurus were being used by the student while he was on the laptop.

Conversation

S: "My friend loves gladiator movies and he made me want to find out more."

S: "I watched 'The Deadliest Warrior' on Spike and I really liked the gladiators."

S: "I used an outline this time to help me organize all my ideas and information."

S: "I went back and revised my conclusion to make it stronger."

S: "I think my opening and conclusion will really capture my reader's attention because I worked really hard on this."

S: "I used an online thesaurus to help me find better words."

Title of Writing Sample: Gladiators – My Last Fight!

EXPLOSION BRINGS WAR TO CANADA



Just this morning the Belgian ship, the Imo, and the explosive filled French ship, Mont Blanc, collided which triggered a deadly explosion. This explosion took hundreds of lives.

The Mont Blanc was a steam ship that was shipping explosives to the war in Europe, but the ship was not displaying a white flag. The Imo was carrying relief supplies. Some say the Mont Blanc shouldn't have even been on the water. It was an old beat up ship, another dangerous trigger to the explosion. The two ships collided around 8:45 a.m. this morning. The Imo was delayed a day so it was in a hurry to get out of the harbour and the Mont Blanc was carefully trying to get into the harbour. According to witnesses, there was a flurry of whistles, the Imo protesting to stay where it was and the Mont Blanc demanding the Imo to move. Then... BAM! **"They looked as if they were deliberately trying to run into each other,"** said witness Barbara Orr.

Right after the explosion, a dark black cloud rose over 20,000 feet above the city.

The blast also created a Tsunami that made a wave 18 meters high crash into the city. For almost 2 square kilometers nothing was left standing. Pieces of debris landed more than 5 km away. Some people had no idea what had happened. They thought they were under a German attack.

"All I know is one moment I was in my bed, and the next I was standing in the hall," says Millicent Swindell.

Possibly every window in the whole city was shattered from the sound waves of explosion. The explosion took what we think was hundreds of lives instantly with thousands more wounded. That leaves an estimated 10,000 people effected by the explosion. Entire blocks of houses were destroyed and all rail ties, telegraph, electricity and water lines were destroyed.

"I remember walking out and another child said 'Oh, Milly! Your eye is out on your cheek!' It had been sucked out by air concussion and I was unaware of it," again said Millicent Swindell.

Remarkably, the regular morning train stopped instantly before reaching explosion range. No one knows why, but people are trying to locate Vince Coleman, the train and telegraph dispatcher. He may have had something to do with this miracle.

The explosion didn't just leave hundreds dead; it also left hundreds of questions. Is this the worst catastrophe in Canadian history? Is this going to cause a population crisis? Or, the most feared question of all... Will the explosion bring the Great War to Canada? We can try to think that the explosion did not happen, but the damage will leave such a scar, it may never heal.

Proficient	
<u>C</u>	Adapts specific forms to match content/audience/purpose, i.e., story to diagram, news report to poem/comic strip
<u>P</u>	Creates well developed paragraphs
<u>P</u>	Uses writing elements that work together to support purpose
<u>P</u>	Uses different types of format and presentation for effect
<u>O</u>	Revises to enhance meaning and effect according to pre-determined criteria
<u>O</u>	Edits and proofreads own and others' work independently
<u>C</u>	Reflects upon overall effect of writing process and product independently
<u>O</u>	Takes responsibility for the planning, revising, and editing to ensure writing achieves its purpose
<u>P</u>	Uses dialogue to create an effect appropriate to purpose and audience with guidance
<u>P</u>	Uses relevant details that go beyond the obvious or predictable
<u>P/O</u>	Selects from a variety of previously acquired tools and strategies for gathering and evaluating information

Observation

The student looks to the criteria established in class, consults notes from mini-lessons on revision, and uses a thesaurus.

While engaged in peer-conferencing, he crosses out, changes, and underlines words and punctuation that is incorrect and offers editing advice to his peer.

He checks and verifies facts from his notes to other texts and websites.

Conversation

S: "A newspaper article would be the best form to suit my purpose of informing my reader."

S: "I think that using pictures, creative fonts, and graphic quotes work well to grab my readers' attention."

Title of Writing Sample: Explosion Brings War to Canada