

PLACING STUDENTS INTO THE PROGRAM

Students should begin each unit by writing a passage in response to a prompt. This writing sample can be used as the placement test as well as the pretest. You score the samples with a rubric (provided for each form of writing) that considers the following elements: organization, content, style, and mechanics.

A perfect score is 100 points. If your students score 20-95 points, they have the necessary preskills to participate in the unit.

Guidelines for placement:

- 0-19 points: The student may not function well at the level tested. If, because of class organization, the student must be placed in this level, they will require accommodation and assistance.
- 20-95 points: The student is properly placed and will benefit from instruction at the level tested.
- 96-100 points: The student may have skills exceeding those taught at the level tested. If, because of class organization, the student must be placed in this level, they can still benefit from participation in this level of the program. Additional challenges can be added by making adjustments on the rubric for what is required of this student. For example, if the rubric requires students to make use of forms of advanced punctuation (semicolon, parentheses, em dash), the higher performing students can be required to use all three forms of advanced punctuation.

After students have completed the placement test and you know they are appropriately placed, you are ready to begin the lessons.

GETTING READY TO START

Note: The pretest should be used to determine if your students are working at the Advanced level of Expository Writing. A pretest should be administered and scored before you introduce this unit.

PREPARATION: Each student will need lined paper and a pocket folder to use as a writing portfolio in which to keep writing assignments.

Write the following prompt on a transparency or make a Smart Board file:

Write a passage of three hundred to five hundred words that compares and contrasts elementary school and middle school. First, write an introductory paragraph. Next, write one paragraph describing elementary school and one paragraph describing middle school. Then write one paragraph telling about their similarities and another paragraph telling about their differences. Finally, write a concluding paragraph.

Introducing Expository Writing

You are going to learn to be authors in many different forms of writing. Sometimes authors work with others to produce a piece of writing. This kind of writing is called a collaborative writing project. Authors who work together enjoy sharing their ideas.

Sometimes we will work as a collaborative group to write a class piece of writing. When we do a collaborative piece of writing, I will write our ideas and the piece of writing on chart paper or on the Smart Board. Everyone will contribute ideas to the class piece of writing. (Note: Writing can be word processed using a computer and a Smart Board.)

Sometimes authors work alone. After we work collaboratively, you will produce a piece of writing of your own.

For the next several lessons, you will be learning about expository writing. Expository writing informs the reader about something or explains something to the reader.

Expository writing is about facts. It is nonfiction. In this expository writing unit, we will focus on two kinds of expository writing: writing a summary and writing that compares and contrasts ideas or topics.

OBTAINING A BEGINNING WRITING SAMPLE—PRETEST

Administering the Pretest

(Explain to students that, before they start the Expository Writing Unit, you would like to collect a sample of their writing. Mention that you will save this sample so you and they can see how their writing develops as they learn more about writing expository passages.)

Display the writing prompt. Call on a student to read aloud the prompt to the class as they follow along. Tell students to listen carefully to the instructions.) **Are there any words or instructions in this prompt you don't fully understand?** (Explain the meaning of any words or instructions students ask about.)

Allow students sufficient time to write. Ask them to edit, proofread, and write or word process a final copy of their passage. Use the rubric (page 12) and scoring guide found below to evaluate each student's writing. Staple the rubric to each student's piece of writing. Keep the writing sample and the scoring rubric for comparison at the end of the unit.)

Scoring the Pretest

(For each element:

Give a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.

Give a score of 1 for each element at the emerging level.

Give a score of 2-3 for each element at the basic level.

Give a score of 4 for each element at the proficient level based on the state curriculum or Common Core State Standards.

Give a score of 5 for each element at the advanced level.

Total the scores for each individual element. Place students according to the guidelines for placement found on page 10.)

Name _____

Date _____

Scoring Rubric for a Passage that Compares and Contrasts

Scoring the Sample

Pretest

Posttest

Give a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.

Give a score of 1 for each element at the emerging level.

Give a score of 2-3 for each element at the basic level.

Give a score of 4 for each element at proficient level.

Give a score of 5 for each element at the advanced level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Piece of Expository Writing	
The author of this passage that compares and contrasts...	Points Earned
Organization	
Uses an opening paragraph that clearly states the intent of the passage with a thesis statement.	
Places details related to the topic in the middle paragraphs.	
Includes a final paragraph that summarizes the passage.	
Groups related ideas.	
Uses a logical sequence.	
Content	
Maintains consistent focus and objectivity.	
States the similarities and the differences.	
Combines ideas to condense information.	
Maintains a balance between the information given about the two items.	
Presents a choice to the reader in the concluding paragraph.	
Style	
Maintains accuracy of facts.	
Uses a variety of sentence structures (simple, compound, complex).	
Uses correct and consistent verb tense and active voice throughout the passage.	
Uses parallel construction for similar parts of each sentence.	
Uses connecting words to show similarities and differences (while, on the other hand, despite, and, also, but).	
Mechanics	
Indents paragraphs.	
Uses the conventions of capitalization for titles and proper nouns.	
Uses commas correctly with appositives and in combined sentences.	
Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
Uses appropriate punctuation and makes use of parentheses, dashes, and/or semi-colons.	
Total Points	