

PLACING STUDENTS INTO THE PROGRAM

Students should begin this unit by writing a letter 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 use a positive comment to open the letter, the higher performing students can be required to make more than one comment.

After students have completed the placement test and you know they're 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 Intermediate 1 Level of Letter Writing. A pretest should be administered and scored before you introduce this unit.

Introducing Letter Writing

(Explain what the class will be doing during this Letter Writing unit:) **We're going to have fun together as you 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 cooperative writing project. The people who work together enjoy sharing their ideas.**

Sometimes we will work as a cooperative group to write letters. When we write a letter as a group, I'll write our ideas and the letter on chart paper or type it on the Smart Board. Everyone will contribute ideas to the class letter. (Note: Writing can be word processed using a computer and a Smart Board.)

Sometimes authors work alone. After we work cooperatively, you'll produce a letter of your own.

For the next several days, you'll be learning about letter writing. When we write letters, we are exchanging handwritten or printed messages with another person or group of people. We will be learning about writing two specific kinds of letters: friendly letters and business letters of concern.

OBTAINING A BEGINNING WRITING SAMPLE—PRETEST

PREPARATION: Display the following writing prompt on the board or on a Smart Board:
You have noticed that a number of students, including yourself, get dropped off at school early so parents can get to work. These students often stand in rain, cold, or snow until the front door is unlocked. Write a letter of concern to the principal explaining the problem and suggesting a solution.

Administering the Pretest

(Note: If the situation in the prompt is not true for your school, have students imagine the situation.)

Explain to students that before they start the Letter 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 letters.

Read aloud the prompt to the students. Ask them to write their letter of concern on lined paper or word process it. Allow them sufficient time to write. Ask students to edit, proofread, and write or word process a final copy of the letter. Use the rubric and scoring guide found on the following page 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 _____

RUBRIC

Pretest

Posttest

Scoring the Sample

- Give the student a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.
- Give the student a score of 1 for each element at the emerging level.
- Give the student a score of 2-3 for each element at the basic level.
- Give the student a score of 4 for each element at proficient level.
- Give the student a score of 5 for each element at the advanced level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Letter of Concern	
The author of this letter of concern.....	Points Earned
Organization	
Includes the writer's complete address and the date.	
Includes an inside address.	
Uses an appropriate salutation.	
Uses an appropriate closing.	
Concludes the letter of concern with a signature and prints name below.	
Content	
Opens the letter with a positive comment.	
Expresses the concern clearly.	
Makes suggestions to address the concern.	
Presents logical and well-supported reasons, facts, and examples.	
Expresses appreciation for considering the author's point of view.	
Style	
Identifies and defines the concern in an appropriate way.	
Uses precise vocabulary.	
Uses a variety of sentence structures.	
Uses language that compels the reader to act.	
Establishes a clear focus with little or no irrelevant or repetitious information.	
Mechanics	
Uses correct capitalization for proper nouns.	
Uses commas in dates and addresses.	
Uses appropriate end punctuation.	
Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
Uses standard English usage (grammar).	
Total Points	