

ATTACHMENT B

Writing Collection Procedures for Spring 2006 Texas Observation Protocols (TOP) October 2005

In addition to the new qualifying requirements for Grades 2–12 writing, there are a number of changes to be aware of concerning the TOP writing collections:

- Writing collections are not required for either Kindergarten or Grade 1 this year.
- Raters will base their ratings strictly on the contents of the writing collections for Grades 2–12. Additional classroom observations will not be used.
- A state audit of the writing collections will be conducted following the spring 2006 administration.
- The instructions for the contents of the writing collections are more explicit this year. It is important for TOP raters of students in Grades 2–12 to be aware of the new writing collection procedures before they begin collecting student writing samples.
- An individual designated by the campus coordinator will be responsible for verifying the contents of the writing collections.

Kindergarten and Grade 1

Last year writing collections were optional for Kindergarten but required for Grade 1. This year writing collections are optional for both grade levels. Please note, however, that **the rating of TOP writing is still required for Kindergarten and Grade 1**. In accordance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations, K–12 limited English proficient (LEP) students must be assessed in all four language domains.

Ratings Based on the Writing Collections

Last year raters were instructed to observe the writing of their LEP students during classroom instruction and writing activities, determine their proficiency ratings, and assemble writing collections that supported the ratings assigned.

This year raters of students in Grades 2–12 will assemble student writing collections and base their ratings solely on the contents of the writing collections. The ratings will not reflect additional classroom observations. The fact that the ratings will be based solely on the contents of the writing collections allows districts as well as the state to implement ways to monitor rating effectiveness and training needs. It also makes it essential for the writing collections to accurately represent the English language writing proficiency of the students.

Spring 2006 Writing Collection Audit

A state audit of the writing collections will be conducted following the spring 2006 administration. This activity will allow the state to monitor the adequacy of the writing collections and the degree of rating accuracy. More details about the audit will be shared later in the school year.

Instructions for Assembling Writing Collections

Instructions regarding the contents of the writing collections are more explicit this year. The instructions are designed to help raters ensure that the collections accurately portray the students' overall English language writing proficiency.

- Each writing collection must contain **at least 5 writing samples** and must include **at least 1 narrative writing sample about a past event** and **2 academic writing samples**.
- Writing assigned on or after **February 1, 2006**, may be considered for the writing collections. Writing assigned before February 1, 2006, is not eligible for inclusion.
- All writing should reflect a student's *current* proficiency level. For students near the border between two levels, the rater should consider using writing assigned toward the latter part of the collection window. The more recent

the writing samples are for these students, the more accurately the collections will reflect their proficiency level at the time of the ratings.

- All writing assignments must include the student's name and date.

Guidance regarding the types of writing samples to include in the collections is provided below. Remember that each writing collection must contain **at least 5 writing samples** and include **at least 1 narrative about a past event (see Type 3)** and **2 academic writing samples (see Type 6)**.

Type 1: Basic descriptive writing on a personal/familiar topic

Examples:

- Write about yourself, your family, your best friend, your school, etc.
- Describe what you see in this picture, photo, piece of art, etc.
- Compare yourself to a friend or relative, describing how you are alike and how you are different
- Compare two friends, two pictures, two photos, two places you've lived or houses you've lived in, etc.

Encourage students to include biographical information, physical traits, and personality traits. The writing collection should include a copy of any pictures used.

Type 2: Writing about a familiar process

Examples:

- A daily routine (getting ready for school, what you do after school or on weekends)
- How to prepare a familiar food or recipe (sandwich, taco, fruit drink, scrambled eggs)
- How to play a familiar game or sport

Type 3: Narrative writing about a past event

Examples:

- Stories based on something shown in a picture or pictures
- Narratives about something that happened or that you did that was disappointing, unforgettable, surprising, interesting, unexpected, funny, unfair, etc.
- Original stories composed in creative writing activities
- Narratives about what you did this morning, yesterday, this weekend (appropriate for beginners only)

Students should be told to write in as much detail as they can. The more vivid and detailed their narratives are, the more useful they will be in evaluating vocabulary development, ability to narrate and describe using the past tense, and grasp of basic versus complex language structures. **At least 1 sample of this type of writing is required in each collection.**

Type 4: Reflective writing

Examples:

- A time when you learned a lesson, resolved a problem with another person, etc.
- What true friendship is, the importance of believing in yourself, setting goals, etc.
- What you like, don't like, or would like to see changed about certain school rules or policies
- A person you admire, a person who has influenced your life, etc.
- How first impressions of people can change
- What it was like to move to the United States, learn a new language, etc.
- What you thought about the United States or Texas before you moved here compared to what you think now

Type 5: Extended writing on a topic from language arts

Many of the above types of writing are assigned during language arts classes. Other types of extended writing tasks from this content area are also appropriate.

Examples:

- Writing reflective pieces linked to stories and literature read in class (e.g., comparing events in a text with personal experiences; relating a character’s conflict in a text to a personal experience, experience of a friend, experience of a relative, etc.)
- Describing and analyzing a change that a character undergoes
- Comparing story variants, a movie and novel based on the same story, etc.

Type 6: Academic writing from science, mathematics, and social studies

Academic writing should give students the opportunity to write connected paragraphs using the academic/abstract vocabulary and language structures needed for developing academic language proficiency in these subject areas. Academic writing tasks for less proficient students should be appropriately adapted for their level. **Two samples of academic writing are required in each collection.**

Examples from science:

- Explain a scientific process you have learned about
- Explain the steps in an experiment or scientific investigation you have done
- Write about something you are learning in your science class, whether it is difficult or easy to learn, why it is important to know, etc.
- Write about why lab rules are important
- Write about how to use a certain device or piece of science equipment
- Write about something you like to do or don’t like to do in your science class

Examples from mathematics:

- Write about a way you have used mathematics outside of school
- Explain the steps you use in a mathematical process
- Write about something you are learning in your math class, whether it is difficult or easy to learn, why it is important to know, etc.
- Write to reflect the thinking you do to solve a problem
- Write about something you like to do or don’t like to do in your math class

Examples from social studies:

- Write about a historical figure, the person’s contributions or significance, etc.
- Write an expository piece about an important historical or current event
- Write about something you are learning in your social studies class, whether it is difficult or easy to learn, why it is important to know, etc.
- Defend a point of view about a governmental policy or controversial issue
- Write a persuasive piece to influence a change in a policy or law
- Write about something you like to do or don’t like to do in your social studies class

Note: Teachers should not feel limited by the types of writing and examples provided above, as these are not intended to be exhaustive.

Tips for Good Writing Collections

- In all writing assignments, encourage students to take their time and write in as much detail as they can.
- In each collection, include some writing tasks that allow students to show what they **can do**. These tasks should allow them to use language they have internalized, write in their “comfort zone,” and show the English they know.
- Also include some writing tasks that stretch and push students’ limits so that you can see the full extent of their language abilities and any elements of second language acquisition they still need to develop. This will be especially important when you are trying to judge whether an advanced student has perhaps reached the advanced high level. Make a special effort to assign these students extended writing tasks that require them to, for example, use abstract language, analyze, hypothesize, defend a point of view, explain a complex process in detail, use precise and descriptive language, etc.

Papers NOT to Include in the Writing Collections

DO NOT include the following types of papers in the writing collections:

- Papers containing language directly copied from a textbook, lesson, or other written source
 - Students need to write using their own words.
- Papers in which the student relies heavily on a dictionary or thesaurus
- Papers that show a teacher’s corrections
- Worksheets or question-answer writing assignments
- Papers that have been polished through editing by peers, parents, or teachers
 - Students may revise their writing as long as the revisions are their own. It is natural for students to seek occasional assistance and guidance when writing. If you believe a student received too much assistance on a piece of writing, do not include it in the collection.
- Papers in which the student writes primarily in his or her native language
- Papers that are brief, incomplete, or obviously reflect writing that was rushed
 - **Rushed** pieces will not accurately portray the student’s English language proficiency level. Students should be given plenty of time to complete the writing assignments.
 - **Brief** writing samples should not be included in the collections of students who are capable of extended writing. (It is to be expected that the limited English of beginning and lower intermediate students will cause some writing to be brief.)

Verifying the Writing Collection Components

In conjunction with the district coordinator and principal, the campus testing coordinator will designate a person to review and verify the contents of the writing collections on the campus. This person may be an LPAC administrator, school counselor, or other suitable designee. Note that the designee must **not** be a TOP rater.

The campus testing coordinator is responsible for training the reviewer to verify the contents of the writing collections. The reviewer is not required to receive training in the TOP holistic rating process but should receive training in TOP administration procedures. More than one reviewer may be designated if necessary.

The reviewer will verify that –

- each collection contains **at least 5 total writing samples**;
- each writing collection includes **at least 1 narrative about a past event** and **2 academic writing samples** from science, social studies, or mathematics;
- all writing assignments include the student’s name and date;
- no writing samples come from before February 2006;
- no papers showing teacher corrections are included; and
- no worksheets or question-answer writing assignments are included.

The designated reviewer will sign the TOP writing collection cover sheet to affirm that the writing collection has been adequately assembled, as described above.

In cooperation with the district coordinator, campus coordinators will establish a process and timeline for the review of the collections.

Note that the **rater**, not the reviewer, is responsible for ensuring that the following types of papers are **not** included in the collections:

- Papers containing language directly copied from a textbook, lesson, or other written source
- Papers in which the student relies heavily on a dictionary or thesaurus
- Papers that have been polished through editing by peers, parents, or teachers
- Papers in which the student writes primarily in his or her native language
- Papers that are brief, incomplete, or obviously reflect writing that was rushed