

Oakland Unified School District

Process Writing Assessment

Overview of the PWA

What: The PWA is an authentic, formative writing assessment that incorporates the writing process into its design and administration. It consists of three days to four weeks of writing lessons culminating in the creation of a first draft that is collected for analysis and scoring.

The assessment is based on the California Language Arts Standards. The PWA in grades 4-9 assesses children in a same genre all year, to allow teachers to evaluate students' progress in that particular type of writing. The K-3 PWA instead introduces children gradually to the different writing genres over the course of four years, and therefore the prompts in any given year fall into different genres. In the elementary grades, the PWA is thematically linked and compatible with Open Court Reading, but *not* dependent upon OCR lessons, curriculum, materials or timing.

Why: The purposes of the PWA are to:

- Give teachers authentic information about how their students' writing skills are developing, which they can use to plan whole-class and differentiated writing instruction
- Support students in learning about writing & the writing process, and enable them to produce their best work for assessment
- Promote collegial conversations about effective writing instruction
- Give parents and administrators an idea about what Oakland children know about writing
- Give students appropriate practice to meet grade level standards and the challenge (at the secondary level) of demonstrating academic writing proficiency on demand

When, Where & Who: K-5 teachers administer the PWA three times a year—fall, winter & spring—in their own classrooms during the language arts time block, taking one to four weeks to complete the assessment, depending on time available and the needs of the class. Teachers collect and score the assessments using the provided rubric and anchor papers. ELA or English teachers of grades 6-9 administer the PWA in the fall and spring. Teachers collect and score the assessments.

How: Each assessment includes detailed instructions for a series of lessons leading to the creation of a first draft about the prompt topic. At the secondary level, students are guided through lessons and activities over the course of two to three days. In elementary, over the course of one to four weeks, students share and expand background knowledge, explore related vocabulary, organize ideas, and finally create a first draft that is collected for assessment.

Then in Professional Learning Communities at each school site, preferably lead by a teacher leader trained in the facilitation of calibration and scoring, teachers review the anchor papers and practice scoring with the annotated training papers provided. (K-3 training papers not yet available.) Each paper is then read and scored by two readers. Partner scorers stop after a designated time to compare scores and if scores differ by more than a point, time is taken to discuss the writing and to “re-calibrate.”

The collaborative scoring process should dedicate a block of time 20-30 minutes, to discuss the patterns seen in the writing. Follow-up conversations are scheduled to discuss instructional implications and ideas for teaching to improve targeted writing skills. If there are remaining papers to be scored, teachers do this independently and then trade with a partner for a second read.

After the scoring is complete, teachers and students may then continue the writing process with revision and publication.

