

### **To PIE parents, regarding the B.C. Writing Performance Standards Package:**

The papers you have just received make up a package that shows parents and students what the B.C. education system's expectations of a student's writing ability are for the end of the year at your child's grade level. Our goal is to provide a step-by-step overview of the expected development in your child's **personal writing** from the beginning of a school year to the end of the year, using the rating scale and the progression from 'not yet meeting expectations' to 'fully meeting expectations.' We believe that this package will be of benefit to you in assessing your child's learning, and guiding each of them in improving their pre-writing and writing strategies and abilities. Our first priority is to improve student learning.

The BC performance standards describe levels of achievement in key areas of learning. The performance standards answer the questions: "*How good is good enough?* What does it look like when a student's work has met the expectations at this grade level?" We divide the expectations for writing for each grade level into four categories (which are probably familiar to you from the report card format that we use): not yet meeting expectations, meeting expectations at a minimal level, fully meeting expectations, and exceeding expectations. In the package we've given you, you will find an explanation of what each of those categories means in the areas of meaning (what the piece of writing is about), style (how language is used), form (following the models of writing) and conventions (following the rules of writing).

Each package also includes a writing sample that gives an example of what a student's writing might look like in each of the four categories of expectations, including some general observations on why each sample fits into that category. These are intended to be helpful in assessing your own child's writing, and in giving direction to you as parents in guiding each of them to improve their writing skills.

Some ways that B.C. performance standards can be useful are:

- They provide feedback to students about their writing;
- They support self-assessment by each child;
- They provide a consistent standard of assessment among teachers, students and parents;
- They document evidence of student growth from the beginning of the year to the end;
- They provide examples teachers and students can refer to.

Some practical suggestions for using these performance standards are:

- Using the rating scale as a checklist with your child to keep track of improvement and growth;
- Using the rating scale with your child(ren)'s teacher at each reporting period to help in assessing your child's progress in writing;
- Using the writing samples provided to help you in evaluating your child(ren)'s own work in order to challenge them and focus on specific learning goals in writing.

We are looking forward to using these performance standards as a shared tool with you to encourage writing skills, to make reporting on writing more meaningful, and to engage your children in assessing their own writing and improving the quality of their personal writing. Please let us know if you have any questions – as partners in education we are truly committed to working with you in encouraging each child's full potential, and we know that this is an excellent way to do that.

## Writing GRADE 9

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# Writing Personal Views or Response

**S**tudents are frequently asked to write about their thoughts, feelings, and opinions in reaction to current issues, materials they have read or viewed, or their own experiences.

In Grade 9, students often write journal entries, record their responses to reading and viewing, offer views on current issues, and share their experiences. In some cases, these pieces of writing are eventually crafted for an audience; however, most often, they are not revised and edited, and the audience is the teacher or the student himself or herself.

## Key Qualities

The following is a summary of the key qualities of each aspect of personal writing in Grade 9. The *Quick Scale* and *Rating Scale* provide more details regarding specific criteria related to these key qualities.

### MEANING

- ◆ comes from thoughts, feelings, opinions, memories, and reflections

### STYLE

- ◆ demonstrates clarity and some variety in language

### FORM

- ◆ begins with a clear introduction and follows a logical sequence through to a conclusion
- ◆ because this writing is not revised or edited, some of the connections and transitions may be awkward

### CONVENTIONS

- ◆ follows standard conventions for basic spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure; has been checked for errors

## Prescribed Learning Outcomes

The BC performance standards for Grade 9 personal writing reflect the following prescribed learning outcomes from Grade 9 of the *English Language Arts 8 to 12 Integrated Resource Package*. Using the writing performance standards in a comprehensive way will provide teachers with many opportunities to assess these learning outcomes.

### PURPOSES (WRITING)

It is expected that students will:

- ◆ write meaningful **personal texts** that explore ideas and information [C1]

### STRATEGIES (WRITING)

*[C5-7] Addressing these learning outcomes helps students in using strategies to develop their writing, but the Writing Performance Standards describe the product not the processes used.*

### THINKING (WRITING)

It is expected that students will:

- ◆ write and **represent** to explain and support personal responses to **texts** [C8]

### FEATURES (WRITING)

It is expected that students will:

- ◆ use and experiment with elements of style in writing and representing, appropriate to purpose and audience, to enhance meaning and artistry [C12]
- ◆ use and experiment with elements of form in writing and representing, appropriate to purpose and audience, to enhance meaning and artistry [C13]
- ◆ use conventions in writing and representing, appropriate to purpose and audience, to enhance meaning and artistry [C14]

## Quick Scale: Grade 9 Writing Personal Views or Response

The Quick Scale is a summary of the Rating Scale that follows. Both describe student achievement in March-April of the school year.

Writing personal views or response is usually expected to be checked for errors, but not revised or edited.

Aspect	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<b>SNAPSHOT</b>	<i>The writing shows problems in logic, style, and mechanics.</i>	<i>The writing is generally easy to follow and understand, but does not engage the reader.</i>	<i>The writing is clear and analytic; flows smoothly.</i>	<i>The writing is engaging with some sophistication in ideas or language.</i>
<b>MEANING</b> • ideas and information • use of detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• often very brief; may make unsupported generalizations</li> <li>• reasoning is difficult to follow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear point of view; some relevant ideas</li> <li>• some explanation and examples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops a reasonable point of view with some individuality</li> <li>• builds a position through detail, example, explanations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offers an engaging perspective; mature; shows individuality</li> <li>• builds a convincing position; may use sophisticated strategies (e.g., irony)</li> </ul>
<b>STYLE</b> • clarity, variety, and impact of language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• basic, general language; sometimes inappropriate</li> <li>• sentences are short and simple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conversational, with some attempts to be precise</li> <li>• some variety in sentence length and pattern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• varies language, sometimes for effect</li> <li>• varies sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• varies language to develop subtleties of meaning</li> <li>• varies sentence structure for effect</li> </ul>
<b>FORM</b> • beginning, middle, end • organization and sequence • transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• middle and ending may be weak in relation to the beginning</li> <li>• simple transitions; some abrupt shifts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective opening; includes a clear middle and an ending</li> <li>• sequence is logical; transitions are appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops smoothly from effective beginning to a logical conclusion</li> <li>• predictable sequence; variety of transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops from engaging introduction to a satisfying ending</li> <li>• effective sequence and organization; smooth transitions</li> </ul>
<b>CONVENTIONS</b> • spelling • punctuation • sentence structure • grammar (e.g., modifiers, agreement, verb tense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frequent, repeated errors in basic words and structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some errors, but meaning is clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may have occasional errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally correct</li> </ul>

## Rating Scale: Grade 9 Writing Personal Views or Response

Student achievement in writing personal views or response by March–April of Grade 9 can generally be described as shown in this scale.

Aspect	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)
<b>SNAPSHOT</b>	<i>The writing shows problems in logic, style, and mechanics; may be confusing. The student may need help to complete the task.</i>	<i>The writing is generally easy to follow and understand, but does not engage the reader.</i>
<b>MEANING</b> • ideas and information • use of detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• purpose or point of view may be unclear; often very brief; may be illogical</li> <li>• may attempt to develop or elaborate ideas; however, it is difficult to follow the writer’s reasoning; often includes unsupported generalizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• takes a clear stance or point of view; presents some relevant ideas</li> <li>• some development through explanations and examples; often without much analysis; may be lapses in logic</li> </ul>
<b>STYLE</b> • clarity, variety, and impact of language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficult to read; no sense of fluency or flow</li> <li>• language may show some variety but tends to be basic and general, and may be inappropriate in places</li> <li>• sentences are short and simple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally easy to read; some sense of flow from one sentence to the next</li> <li>• largely conversational, with some instances of more precise language for effect</li> <li>• some variety in sentence length and pattern</li> </ul>
<b>FORM</b> • beginning, middle, end • organization and sequence • transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the middle and ending may be weak in relation to the beginning</li> <li>• sequence may be logical, especially if there is limited material</li> <li>• may shift abruptly from one idea to another; often written as a single paragraph</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• beginning introduces the topic and attempts to engage the reader; includes a clear middle and an end</li> <li>• sequence is logical</li> <li>• links ideas with appropriate transitions; most paragraphing is logical</li> </ul>
<b>CONVENTIONS</b> • spelling • punctuation • sentence structure • grammar (e.g., modifiers, agreement, verb tense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frequent, repeated errors in basic spelling and grammar distract the reader and may obscure meaning</li> <li>• no sense of control in sentence structure; often includes run-on sentences</li> <li>• frequently includes agreement problems, illogical shifts in verb tense, or problems with modifiers or pronouns</li> <li>• few corrections; little evidence that the writing has been reread and checked for errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar occasionally distract the reader, but meaning is clear</li> <li>• follows basic rules for sentence construction, but may include some run-on sentences</li> <li>• may include agreement problems, illogical shifts in verb tense, or problems with modifiers or pronouns</li> <li>• appears to have been reread; obvious errors may have been corrected</li> </ul>

The rating scale may require adaptation when used for different purposes and tasks.

	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
	<i>The writing is clear and analytic; flows smoothly.</i>	<i>The writing is engaging and “a pleasure to read,” with some sophistication in ideas or language.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops a reasonable stance or point of view with some voice or individuality</li> <li>• builds a position or argument through the use of detail, example, explanations; includes sufficient material to meet requirements of the activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offers an engaging perspective; individuality of the writer comes through; features some maturity or sophistication in ideas</li> <li>• builds a convincing position or argument through detail, example, explanation; may use more sophisticated strategies (e.g., develop hypothetical situations; use satire or irony)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flows smoothly; easy to read</li> <li>• varies language according to topic and purpose; may choose words for effect</li> <li>• uses a variety of sentence forms; although attempts sometimes result in problems (e.g., run-on sentences, awkwardness)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flows smoothly and naturally—sense of effortlessness</li> <li>• varies language to develop subtleties of meaning and effect</li> <li>• varies sentence structure, sometimes to create a particular effect</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops smoothly, from a clear and often interesting introduction or thesis statement to a logical conclusion</li> <li>• follows a predictable sequence</li> <li>• uses a variety of transitions to establish connections among ideas; related ideas are grouped together; paragraphing is logical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develops from an engaging introduction, which usually includes a thesis statement, to a satisfying ending</li> <li>• organization and sequence are effective and add to the impact of the writing</li> <li>• connections and relationships among ideas are clear; smooth transitions create a sense of movement from beginning to end</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may have occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar</li> <li>• may include occasional errors or awkwardness in complex sentence structures (e.g., inappropriate subordination)</li> <li>• verb tenses are consistent; may have occasional problems with agreement or placement of modifiers</li> <li>• appears to have been carefully reread and checked for errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• spelling, punctuation, and grammar are generally correct</li> <li>• errors in sentence structure are usually the result of experimentation or attempts to develop complex structures</li> <li>• may include occasional grammatical errors; these are usually subtle</li> <li>• appears to have been carefully reread and checked for errors; most errors have been eliminated</li> </ul>

## Sample Task: Impromptu Writing

### CONTEXT

In this class, students frequently wrote about their ideas and opinions before and after reading, discussion, and debating activities. During the year, they learned a variety of ways to generate and shape ideas for writing. From time to time, they were asked to write impromptu, timed essays on topics related to their experiences—topics were often suggested by the class. The teacher used these impromptu essays to help diagnose students' independent writing skills and assess their progress.

### PROCESS

Students were asked to write an extended-paragraph or multi-paragraph composition within a 60-minute period. The teacher briefly reviewed some of the prewriting strategies they had learned for generating and shaping ideas and drew students' attention to posters outlining writing strategies and a proofreader's checklist that were displayed in the classroom.

Students chose from three topics:

- ◆ adventure
- ◆ surprises
- ◆ first impressions

Students completed their work independently. Students did not have opportunities to consult with others or to make substantial revisions, but the teacher encouraged them to use classroom resources (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, class posters) and to proofread their work carefully.



## NOT YET WITHIN EXPECTATIONS

### Teacher's Observations

The writer offers a somewhat confusing list of "surprises," with no sense of control or logical development.

- ◆ attempts to develop ideas; however, it is difficult to follow the writer's reasoning (too many examples, some more developed than others)
- ◆ no sense of fluency or flow (abrupt shifts between ideas and examples)
- ◆ shifts abruptly from one idea to another
- ◆ includes run-on sentences

	Not Yet	Meets	Fully	Exceeds
SNAPSHOT				
MEANING				
STYLE				
FORM				
CONVENTIONS				

Surprises

Surprises can be exciting and fun but in some cases they can be a little scary. Personally I like surprises. Not knowing what you'll get on a birthday or Christmas. Even your parents taking you somewhere and not knowing can be fun. My parents do it to me sometimes. Then they'll take us to Playdium, the beach or a movie.

Surprises can also be scary or a frightening experience. I've seen young children excited to go somewhere and end up getting a shot or something along those lines. My mom did that to me in Disneyland. She

### TRANSCRIPT

#### Surprises

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Surprises can also be scary or a frightening experience. I've seen young children excited to go somewhere and end up getting a shot or something along those lines. My mom did that to me in Disneyland. She wouldn't let us see what ride we were going on and I couldn't understand why people were exiting wet with a pale face and dazed look in their eyes. I soon understood why when our mom put us

into the log and told us to hold on tight I knew we were on “Splash Mountain”. It was fun, especially this one area where you ride in the dark. There are these bumps you aren’t expecting. The most vivid memory I have of that ride though had to be when you finally reach the top. There are these two vultures sitting on a perch and one says to hang on for your dear life. I don’t think I’ve ever been more surprised at how fast we reached the bottom.

I think that most surprises are fun. I enjoy a good surprise. I would love to have a surprise party but I would probably figure it out before they could pull it off. I’ve never been to a surprise party. Wait ... yeah I have actually for my mom’s boyfriend’s 50th birthday. He was so surprised he started crying. That one was memorable.

There is something magical about a good surprise. You have to figure it out but at the same time you don’t want to know what it is. I always try to figure out what I’m getting for birthdays or Christmas. I end up being so mad at myself when I figure it out though. You don’t know how to react when they give it to you when they think it’s the first you’ve seen it, but in reality it’s not. I always feel so guilty afterwards.

That’s another thing if you know you’re going to be surprised your imagination takes control. You start picturing all these wonderful things you can get. Then when you receive the surprise it’s nothing what you expected at all. You look at it in despair not knowing how to react nor how or what to say. I always feel so bad when that happens. You can usually pull off a fake smile or a forced thank-you but, you know you don’t mean it. Plus that the gift will be shoved in a box never to be seen again.

You can usually count on a few good people for good surprises. For me it’s my grandma and my dad. They always know what you want and always manage to find it no matter how hard it is to find or how limited it is. My dad and grandmother can find anything, just name it.

The best surprises are trips out of town. My dad owns a trucking company so he gets called away a lot on weekends he’ll take me with him, but sometimes he won’t tell me where we are going. Since I’ve been on so many trips with him, just by the way he goes and signs we pass on the highway I can usually guess where we’re going. I still act surprised when we get there. I’m going to end this freewrite by saying that I think surprises are the best. I don’t know anyone, from friends or family who doesn’t love surprises. I think life is one giant surprise because we can’t tell the future and cannot tell what will happen next.

## MEETS EXPECTATIONS (MINIMAL LEVEL)

### Teacher's Observations

The student presents logically connected ideas, although the analysis is somewhat simplistic. Errors in sentence structure detract from the impact of the writing.

- ◆ takes a clear stance; presents some relevant ideas
- ◆ some development through explanations and examples, often without much analysis
- ◆ largely conversational
- ◆ sequence is logical
- ◆ some problems with grammar and sentence structure

	Not Yet	Meets	Fully	Exceeds
SNAPSHOT				
MEANING				
STYLE				
FORM				
CONVENTIONS				

### First Impressions

Ever notice when you walk down the street and you see someone, and right away you judge them? You may not think you judge them, but you do. I always say I hate it when people judge me without even knowing me. I always say I'm never going to judge people, but the sad thing is I do. When you meet people for the first time try to

### TRANSCRIPT

#### First Impressions

Ever notice when you walk down the street and you see someone, and right away you judge them? You may not think you judge them, but you do. I always say I hate it when people judge me without even knowing me. I always say I'm never going to judge people, but the sad thing is I do. When you meet people for the first time try to forget about your first impression of them, and get to know them before you judge them.

I remember when I first met, one of my now best friends. I judged him the very minute I met him. When I first met him I thought oh yeah this guy seems like a real jerk, who does a lot of, what I consider bad things. I didn't like him very much. Just because of my first impression of him.

After I got to know him a little better I realized that my first impression of him was way off! He's actually the exact opposite of what I thought. If I hadn't gotten to know him then I would have missed out on getting to know a really great guy.

Why do people judge people without even getting to know them first? I think it's because of the way you've been brought up. The morals and values you are taught growing up stick with you through your whole life. The ideas your parents give you from when you are a kid, are probably the ideas that you are going to teach your kids.

So next time when you meet someone, get to know them before you judge them because who knows that person just might turn out to be your best friend.

## FULLY MEETS EXPECTATIONS

### Teacher's Observations

The student writes clearly, analytically, and with a strong personal voice.

- ◆ develops a reasonable point of view with some voice and individuality
- ◆ builds a position through the use of detail
- ◆ flows smoothly; easy to read
- ◆ related ideas are grouped (but writing is not paragraphed)
- ◆ verb tenses are consistent (but there are some errors with verbs, e.g., "I would never regret to have taken ... ")

	Not Yet	Meets	Fully	Exceeds
SNAPSHOT				
MEANING				
STYLE				
FORM				
CONVENTIONS				

### ADVENTURE

I believe my first adventure was the move to Canada when I was seven. I had lived in San Francisco for the first two years of my life, but I have no mental memory of it. So in my mind, I had never left Japan until then.

### TRANSCRIPT

#### Adventure

I believe my first adventure was the move to Canada when I was seven. I had lived in San Francisco for the first two years of my life, but I have no mental memory of it. So in my mind, I had never left Japan until then. When my parents told me that we might be moving to Canada, I was surprised, but very excited. Everything happened so fast after that. I remember walking home on the last day of school with my best friends. That was when it hit me like a ball just suddenly dropped from the sky and landed on my head. We were going to a new world, nine hours away (in flight) with different language, culture, people, food, climate ... everything! I never really liked to cry in front of people so I didn't show it, but I was so scared and frightened, I barely slept the night before the flight. Saying good-bye to my grandparents was one of the toughest thing I had to do. They only

lived a block away so we were very close to them. Especially my sister who was practically brought up by them. Little did we know that it was the last time we saw our Grandmother. I don't have much recollection about the flight to Vancouver, but I was amazed when we walked out of the airport. It was just different from Yokohama. (where I lived) It was my first time I had seen so many caucasian people with different hair and eye colour. There were so many trees! Now I know there's many forests in Japan, but back then, I had only lived in the city so the sight of forests and grass amazed me. The first three weeks, we lived in a small hotel on Robson. We couldn't bring our furniture or most of our belongings so we were to start a new life. Learning a new language was hard but my sister and I learned fairly fast. Before in Japan, my mom had her friends in the USA to send us Disney movies so we could get use to the sound of English. Even though I couldn't understand it, my favourite was "The Little Mermaid". As days, then weeks, then months passed by, we all began to get use to our new life style. Our adventure was quite risky, yet rewarding since I believe Canada is a better place for our family to live. I would never regret to have taken this adventure, since without it, I would not be the person I am now.

## EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

### Teacher's Observations

The writing is witty and evocative, and shows sophistication in ideas and language.

- ◆ offers an engaging perspective; the individuality of the writer comes through
- ◆ flows smoothly and naturally—sense of effortlessness
- ◆ varies language to develop subtleties of meaning and effect
- ◆ varies sentence structure, sometimes to create a particular effect
- ◆ appears to have been carefully reread and checked for errors

	Not Yet	Meets	Fully	Exceeds
SNAPSHOT				
MEANING				
STYLE				
FORM				
CONVENTIONS				

### "Adventures"

When I was young, my best friend Jack and I would have 'great adventures in my jungle.' Our jungle was really a huge rhododenderen bush in my front yard, and inside it was hollow, except for some twisting branches that Jack and I would climb. We had hours of fun. We would pretend we were explorers in the Brazilian rainforest, and we would be armed with machetes (not real ones, just sticks) and

### TRANSCRIPT

#### Adventures

When I was young, my best friend Jack and I would have 'great adventures in my jungle.' Our jungle was really a huge rhododenderen bush in my front yard, and inside it was hollow, except for some twisting branches that Jack and I would climb. We had hours of fun. We would pretend we were explorers in the Brazilian rainforest, and we would be armed with machetes (not real ones, just sticks), and we would hack our way through the undergrowth of the forest, taking plant and animal specimans as we went. We would cross over perilous river canyons on a rickety wooden bridge, and sometimes we would fall and become victim to the icy surge of rushing water below. We would have close encounters with

lions and tigers (and bears! Ha ha, just kidding), sometimes slaying the beast and sometimes not. We were always in close contact with the “base camp” (my mom), and the generous people at “base camp” would send in rations (a snack and drink) by helicopter to keep us going. But our most serious threat to Jack and I’s survival was the common, lethal tormentor of our jungle, the Little Sister, or, by it’s scientific name, *tattleus tailus*. This common beast would sneak up on us and, upon discovering that we were climbing too high, would flood us with angry jitters and growls such as “You know you’ve climbed too high!” or “Mummy said Jack has to go home now!” This creature was what all young explorers dreaded above anything else, for it was not something to meddle with, and trying to ignore it or scare it would almost always result in a failed expedition.

Nowadays, my jungle sits empty, and no explorers have ventured in there for a long time. It still stands though, yearning for human exploration into it’s heart. Until the next great adventure of my childhood occurs, my jungle explorations shall always be my favourite.



# BC Performance Standards

## Grade 9 Writing

### Additional Samples

The BC performance standards for Grade 9 writing consist of rating scales that describe student achievement in March-April of a given year and samples illustrating typical tasks and student work at all four levels described in the rating scales.

The additional sample tasks for Grade 9 writing included here generally show two examples of student work for each task:

- one that meets expectations at a minimal level
- one that fully meets expectations

<b>GRADE 9: IMPROMPTU WRITING (PERSONAL VIEWS AND RESPONSE).....</b>	<b>2</b>
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## Grade 9: Impromptu Writing (Personal Views and Response)

### *Sample 1: Impromptu Essay*

#### **Context**

In this class, students frequently write about their ideas and opinions before and after reading, discussion, and debating activities. As part of their writing instruction, they learned a variety of ways to generate and shape ideas for writing. From time to time, they were asked to write impromptu, timed essays on topics related to their experiences—often topics the class suggested. This teacher used these impromptu essays to help diagnose their independent writing skills and to assess their progress.

#### **Process**

The teacher read excerpts and short selections about people who had overcome obstacles (e.g., Terry Fox, Rick Hansen, Roberta Bondar, Silken Laumen, excerpts from *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* by Jack Canfield), and the class discussed some of the key qualities these people demonstrated. In the following period, students were given 50 minutes to plan, write, and check an impromptu essay on the topic “Overcoming Obstacles.” The teacher emphasized that they were to write about their own experiences (or observations of people close to them)—not recount stories from media or books.

The teacher briefly reviewed some of the prewriting strategies they had learned for generating and shaping ideas, and suggested that they consider questions such as:

- Why was it an obstacle?
- Did you have any help?
- What have you learned?
- Are you a better person for it?
- Was it worth the experience?

Students completed their work independently. The teacher encouraged them to use classroom resources (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, posters outlining writing strategies). Students did not have opportunities to consult with others or to make substantial revisions, but they were encouraged to check their work carefully and to indicate clearly any changes they would like to make.

## **Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)**

### *Teacher's Observations*

The writing is engaging but suffers from lack of paragraphing and problems with conventions.

- takes a clear point of view; presents some relevant ideas
- some development through explanations and examples
- generally easy to read; some sense of flow from one sentence to the next
- largely conversational
- some variety in sentence length and pattern
- beginning introduces the topic and attempts to engage the reader; includes a clear middle and an end
- sequence is logical
- links ideas with appropriate transitions (but written as a single paragraph)
- errors in spelling and grammar occasionally distract the reader, but meaning is clear
- follows basic rules for sentence construction, but includes some run-on sentences

## Overcoming Obstacles

Tyler, a friend of my best friend was born without a full arm, and his left arm is just a stub. Tyler had to go to a bunch of treatment to learn how to co-operate with his handicap. They said he would not be able to participate in all the normal sports like hockey, baseball etc. Although he could play soccer, he just did not have the taste for sports. He would be good at computers, video games and stuff like that but the people that he wanted to hang out with were all good at sports. So one day he came outside to play football with me and my friends. He could not even pick up a football. So I decided to put him quarter back and he threw it very, very hard and all of us were amazed. He hung out with us for a bit and we started to like him for who he was and not for how good he could play sports. This was an important obstacle for him to overcome because everyone needs friends and when he wanted to be noticed people liked him for a nice guy after we got to know him.

## **Fully Meets Expectations**

### ***Teacher's Observations***

This is a well-organized piece of writing for a first draft.

- develops a reasonable point of view with some voice and individuality
- builds a position or argument through the use of detail, example, explanations
- flows smoothly; easy to read
- uses a variety of sentence forms
- develops smoothly, from a clear introduction to a logical conclusion
- follows a predictable sequence
- related ideas are grouped together; paragraphing is logical
- occasional errors in spelling (e.g., misspells *chemotherapy*)
- verb tenses are consistent

## Overcoming Obstacles

One of the greatest obstacles in life for a lot of people including Janet Proul is quitting smoking. Janet started smoking at the young age of fourteen, just to fit in and "be cool," just like her friends. If only she would have known back then what a bad effect smoking has on a person's health, lifestyle, and family.

At first smoking was just a fun and cool thing to do, but after a while this little spurt of the moment thing, developed into a serious addiction. She found herself smoking one to two packs every couple of days, and also ended up stealing money from her family to pay for the costly addiction.

Janet smoked for thirteen years before it finally got to her. It wasn't the constant complaints from her family when they got into the car, or the disconcerted expression on people's faces when she walked by, but it was her health that motivated her to quit.

Janet went to the doctor for a yearly check-up when she found out she had a bit of cancer in her left lung. As frightened as she was, Janet decided that it was about time to end her filthy habit.

After six months of chemo therapy to try and get rid of the cancer, Janet had tried to quit two times and had

failed each time. The cancer, fortunately had disappeared, but Janet couldn't get the words of her doctor saying, "you could have died from all those years of smoking."

Janet decided to get real help in quitting and paid for a physical therapist to help overcome her serious habit.

It has been two years since Janet has even touched a cigarette, and she is very happy to be able to live to see her children grow up.

She has realized that smoking is "not cool," and that she shouldn't have even started in the first place. There are much more important things to do in life, and smoking just prevents you to do those things by perhaps killing you. The best thing to do about smoking, is don't ever start!