



# **Understanding the North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model at Grades 4, 7, and 10**

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY SERVICES/NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PROGRAM  
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27699  
[www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing)

UPDATED JULY 2003

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>I Introduction and New Testing Model</b> .....	2-3
<b>II Scoring Procedure</b> .....	4
<b>III North Carolina Writing Assessment at Grades 4, 7, and 10</b> Composing Features.....	5-6
<b>IV North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model</b> Grades 4, 7, and 10—Content.....	7
<b>North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model</b> Grades 4, 7, and 10—Conventions .....	8
<b>V Writing Conventions Table</b> .....	9
<b>VI North Carolina Writing Assessment 2003 Pilot Prompts</b>	
Grade 4 Narrative Prompt.....	10
Grade 7 Argumentative Prompt.....	11
Grade 10 Informational Prompt.....	12
<b>VII North Carolina Writing Advisory Committees, 2003</b> .....	13-15

## INTRODUCTION

North Carolina, believing that an emphasis on writing instruction was needed and that the measurement of writing would enhance instruction, began a statewide writing assessment program in 1983-84. Since that time, students' writing skills have improved as evident by test results, comments from university personnel, and business leaders. Changes in the program have occurred over time as illustrated in the table below.

**Grade Levels and Types of Writing by Year**

<b>Year</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
1983-84		Descriptive			Persuasive	
1984-85		Expository			Expository	
1985-86		Expository		Persuasive		
1986-87		Descriptive		Expository		
1987-88		Expository		Persuasive		
1988-89		Descriptive		Expository		
1989-90		Expository		Persuasive		
1990-91		Descriptive		Expository		Expository
1991-92		Expository		Persuasive		Expository
1992-93	Narrative	Descriptive		Expository		Expository
1993-94	Narrative	Expository		Persuasive		Expository
1994-95	Narrative			Expository		Expository
1995-96	Narrative		Expository			Expository
1996-97	Narrative		Expository			Expository
1997-98	Narrative		Expository			Expository
1998-99	Narrative		Expository			Expository
1999-00	Narrative		Expository			Expository
2000-01	Narrative		Expository			Expository
2001-02	Narrative		Expository			
2002-03	Narrative		Argumentative			Informational
2003-04	Narrative		Argumentative			Informational

### **A New Testing Model**

In September of 2001, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Testing Section, NCDPI English Language Arts, and North Carolina State University-Technical Outreach for Public Schools (NCSU-TOPS) staff met and began the process that would result in new writing assessments and scoring procedures for grades 4, 7, and 10. Writing committees for each grade level were established that included regular education teachers, ESL teachers, exceptional children teachers, curriculum supervisors, principals, and university faculty. The North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model was developed by NCDPI Testing Section and NCSU-TOPS staff, refined by the writing assessment advisory committees, and approved by the State Board of Education on January 9, 2003.

North Carolina will continue to have a required comprehensive writing assessment program that follows students from elementary through secondary school.

Grade Level	Type of Assessment
4	Extended narrative response (personal or imaginative)
7	Extended argumentative response (problem/solution or evaluative)
10	Extended informational response (definition, cause/effect, or problem/solution)

The selection of a scoring procedure to be used in a writing assessment program must be influenced by the program's purpose and by knowledge about the information that the program is expected to provide. The State Board of Education, representing the interests of North Carolina students, educators, and other stakeholders, proposed to collect and provide information using the North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model to achieve these ends. The North Carolina Writing Assessment scoring model is comprised of a content component with a 1-4 score scale and a conventions component with a 0-2 score scale. All student responses will be individually read and scored by two independent readers with a minimum acceptable inter-rater reliability rate of 70 percent. The scores will be summed, whereby each student response can receive 8 possible raw score points for content and 4 possible raw score points for conventions. The raw score points for each component are combined into a total writing score with a possible raw score point total of 12. The actual weighting of raw score points for content verses conventions will be determined at a later time as a component of the performance standard setting (achievement levels) process. Students will receive the following information from the 2003-2004 operational statewide writing assessments: (a) point totals for content, (b) point totals for conventions, (c) total writing scores, and (d) Achievement Level rankings. A review procedure will be incorporated into the scoring process for those students whose Total Writing Score falls within one point of the cut line at Achievement Level III (to be determined using the March 2003 Pilot Administration results). This procedure will preclude an LEA appeal mechanism, as conducted under the previous focused holistic scoring system.

Because the conventions score measures sentence formation, usage, and mechanics, students with disabilities who use the following accommodations during the administration of the writing assessments **will not** receive conventions scores if the appropriate procedures are followed: (a) Dictation to a Scribe, (b) Use of spell check, grammar check, on-line thesaurus, or outlining program during the use of Keyboarding Devices, (c) Use of prediction software, electronic spellers, spell check, or grammar check utilities during the use of Assistive Technology Devices.

NOTE: A student may receive a valid conventions score during the use of the Keyboarding Devices accommodation if the spell check, grammar check, on-line thesaurus, and outlining program are disabled on the keyboarding device prior to the beginning of the test administration.

## **Scoring Procedure**

The first objective of reader training will be to remove any biases that readers might hold concerning the related importance and appropriateness of certain features of written composition. Training materials will be designed to give clear definition to each feature that readers will evaluate and will reduce subjectivity to the lowest possible level. It will be mandatory that readers accept these definitions.

Before scoring begins, test booklets will be divided so that student and school identification information is separated from the response. Thus, factors that could potentially influence reader bias such as geographical location, ethnicity, and gender will be minimized. To ensure accuracy during the scoring process, readers will be required to understand the definitions of each feature and its application. For this reason, inter-rater reliability and validity will be monitored closely throughout the scoring process.

Strict security guidelines will be observed during the scoring process. Readers will sign a test security agreement, wear an identification badge at all times while in the scoring area, and leave all scoring materials in the scoring rooms. Security personnel will monitor compliance with all security guidelines.

## NORTH CAROLINA WRITING ASSESSMENT AT GRADES 4, 7, AND 10 COMPOSING FEATURES

The narrative response at Grade 4 tells a story or what happened. The narrative focuses on the sequencing of events within the overall action. In the personal narrative, the student recounts events that he/she has experienced, read, or heard about. In the imaginative narrative, the student writes about a situation or story based upon his/her imagination.

The argumentative response at Grade 7 focuses on the writer's selection of evidence that justifies the writer's position on a given issue. The writer's argument is strengthened through a continual awareness of purpose, audience, and context. The specific types of argumentative writing assessed at Grade 7 include problem/solution and evaluation.

The informational response at Grade 10 involves the explanation and analysis of relationships. Understanding the purpose, audience, and context of a given task shapes the writer's focus. The response may be supported by the ideas and information provided in the prompt, the student's own experiences, other readings, and/or observations. The specific types of informational writing assessed in Grade 10 include definition, cause and effect, and problem/solution.

The composing features that are to be observed assume specific meanings when applied to student responses. In order to demonstrate a reasonable level of control in any of the features below, the students must have written a sufficient amount. An explanation of each feature and its application to the responses are provided below.

### **Focus**

*Focus is the topic/subject established by the writer in response to the writing task.* The writer must clearly establish a focus as he/she fulfills the assignment of the prompt. If the writer retreats from the subject matter presented in the prompt or addresses it too broadly, the focus is weakened. The writer may effectively use an inductive organizational plan which does not actually identify the subject matter at the beginning and may not literally identify the subject matter at all. The presence, therefore, of a focus must be determined in light of the method of development chosen by the writer. If the reader is confused about the subject matter, the writer has not effectively established a focus. If the reader is engaged and not confused, the writer probably has been effective in establishing a focus.

### **Organization**

*Organization is the progression, relatedness, and completeness of ideas.* The writer establishes for the reader a well-organized composition, which exhibits a constancy of purpose through the development of elements forming an effective beginning, middle, and end. The writer establishes relationships between and among ideas and/or events throughout the response. The response demonstrates a clear progression of related ideas and/or events and is unified and complete.

### **Support and Elaboration**

*Support and Elaboration is the extension and development of the topic/subject.* The writer provides sufficient elaboration to present the ideas and/or events clearly. Two important concepts in determining whether details are supportive are the concepts of *relatedness* and *sufficiency*. To be supportive of the subject matter, details must be related to the focus of the response. Relatedness has to do with the directness of the relationship that the writer

establishes between the support and elaboration and the topic/subject. Supporting details should be relevant and clear. The writer must present his/her ideas with enough power and clarity to cause the support to be sufficient. Effective use of concrete, specific details strengthens the response. Insufficiency is often characterized by undeveloped details, redundancy, and the repetitious paraphrasing of the same point. Sufficiency has less to do with the amount and more to do with the specificity and effectiveness of the support and elaboration provided.

### **Style**

*Style is the control of language that is appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context of the writing task.* The writer's style is evident through word choice and sentence fluency. Skillful use of precise, purposeful vocabulary enhances the effectiveness of the composition through the use of appropriate words, phrases and descriptions that engage the audience. Sentence fluency involves using a variety of sentence styles to establish effective relationships between and among ideas, causes, and/or statements appropriate to the task.

### **Conventions**

*Conventions involve correctness in sentence formation, usage, and mechanics.* The writer has control of grammatical conventions that are appropriate to the writing task. Errors, if present, do not impede the reader's understanding of the ideas conveyed. Page nine of this document details the aspects of grammatical conventions (sentence formation, usage, and mechanics) and provides examples of common errors for each.

**North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model--Grades 4, 7, and 10  
Content Rubric**

Points	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic/subject is clear, though it may or may not be explicitly stated</li> <li>• Maintains focus on topic/subject throughout the response</li> <li>• Organizational structure establishes relationships between and among ideas and/or events</li> <li>• Consists of a logical progression of ideas and/or events and is unified and complete</li> <li>• Support and elaboration are related to and supportive of the topic/subject</li> <li>• Consists of specific, developed details</li> <li>• Exhibits skillful use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful</li> <li>• Demonstrates skillful use of sentence fluency</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic/subject is generally clear, though it may or may not be explicitly stated</li> <li>• May exhibit minor lapses in focus on topic/subject</li> <li>• Organizational structure establishes relationships between and among ideas and/or events, although minor lapses may be present</li> <li>• Consists of a logical progression of ideas and/or events and is reasonably complete, although minor lapses may be present</li> <li>• Support and elaboration may have minor weaknesses in relatedness to and support of the topic/subject</li> <li>• Consists of some specific details</li> <li>• Exhibits reasonable use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful</li> <li>• Demonstrates reasonable use of sentence fluency</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic/subject may be vague</li> <li>• May lose or may exhibit major lapses in focus on topic/subject</li> <li>• Organizational structure may establish little relationship between and among ideas and/or events</li> <li>• May have major lapses in the logical progression of ideas and/or events and is minimally complete</li> <li>• Support and elaboration may have major weaknesses in relatedness to and support of the topic/subject</li> <li>• Consists of general and/or undeveloped details, which may be presented in a list-like fashion</li> <li>• Exhibits minimal use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful</li> <li>• Demonstrates minimal use of sentence fluency</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topic/subject is unclear or confusing</li> <li>• May fail to establish focus on topic/subject</li> <li>• Organizational structure may not establish connection between and among ideas and/or events</li> <li>• May consist of ideas and/or events that are presented in a random fashion and is incomplete or confusing</li> <li>• Support and elaboration attempts to support the topic/subject but may be unrelated or confusing</li> <li>• Consists of sparse details</li> <li>• Lacks use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful</li> <li>• May not demonstrate sentence fluency</li> </ul>
NS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This code may be used for compositions that are entirely illegible or otherwise unscorable: blank responses, responses written in a foreign language, restatements of the prompt, and responses that are off-topic or incoherent.</li> </ul>

**North Carolina Writing Assessment Scoring Model--Grades 4, 7, and 10**  
**Conventions Rubric**

Points	Description
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exhibits reasonable control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits reasonable control of sentence formation</li> <li>• Exhibits reasonable control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case</li> <li>• Exhibits reasonable control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling</li> </ul>
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exhibits minimal control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits minimal control of sentence formation</li> <li>• Exhibits minimal control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case</li> <li>• Exhibits minimal control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling</li> </ul>
0	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lacks control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks control of sentence formation</li> <li>• Lacks control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case</li> <li>• Lacks control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling</li> </ul>



Below is the Grade 4 Imaginative Narrative prompt that was used during the 2003 pilot administration.

**One morning you look out the window and discover that a huge castle has appeared. You rush outside to the castle and hear sounds inside it. Someone is living in the castle! The castle door creaks open. Write a story about what happens next.**

**As you write your story, remember to:**

- Focus your story on what happens after the castle door opens.
- Use details to support the topic/subject of your story.
- Make sure your story is complete and has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Check to be sure that you are writing good paragraphs.
- Use your best grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

**Use the blank sheet of paper given to you by your teacher to plan your story. Anything you write on the blank sheet will not be scored. You must write the final copy of your story on the next page.**

© 2002 All rights reserved. This document may not be reproduced by any means, in whole or in part, without the express written permission of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, N.C.

Below is the Grade 7 Argumentative Problem/Solution prompt that was used during the 2003 pilot administration.

**Your local government has awarded your school \$500,000 to spend on school improvements. Your principal is concerned about how to use this money in a way that will benefit the most students.**

**Write a letter to your principal on how to best use this money for your school.**

*As you write your letter to the principal, be sure to:*

- Focus on the problem of how best to use this money and clearly present your solution.
- Support your solution to the problem of how best to use this money with specific, developed details.
- Organize your letter so that your ideas progress logically.
- Use correct grammar.
- Choose words that are well-suited to the purpose, audience, and context of your letter.

**Use the blank sheet of paper given to you by your teacher to plan your letter. Anything you write on the blank sheet will not be scored. You must write the final copy of your letter on the next page.**

Below is the Grade 10 Informational Cause/Effect prompt that was used during the 2003 pilot administration.

Read the following information:

**On August 20, 1999, CNN published an article titled, “Television’s Effects on Kids: It can be harmful,” by Dr. Daphne Miller.**

**The article stated that the “average child in the United States spends about 25 hours a week in front of the television (including the use of VCR), according to the latest annual *Media in the Home* survey, conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center—a number significantly exceeding the maximum limit suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).”**

**“Over the past several decades a number of studies have shown that there are several ways that television can be harmful to the mental and physical health of children. That’s not to say that all television is bad for kids. In fact, a number of quality children’s shows . . . engage kids in positive ways. However, when children watch television frequently and indiscriminately, the effects can be detrimental.” For example:**

**“The *Media in the Home* survey found that 28 percent of all children’s shows contained four or more incidents of violence per show—a number that media experts consider high.”**

**“There appears to be a strong relationship between time spent in front of the television and being overweight.”**

**“TV watching (especially late-night and violent shows) has been connected with poor sleep patterns in children.”**

Using the information presented, your own experiences, observations, and/or readings, write a speech to present to your community’s elementary and middle school Parent/Guardian Associations in which you examine the harmful effects of children watching too much television.

***As you write your speech, remember to:***

- Focus on the harmful effects of children watching too much television.
- Consider the purpose, audience, and context of your speech.
- Organize your ideas and details effectively.
- Include specific details that clearly develop your speech.
- Edit your speech for standard grammar and language usage.

**Use the blank sheet of paper given to you by your teacher to plan your speech. Anything you write on the blank sheet will not be scored. You must write the final copy of your speech on the next page.**

Members of the NC Writing Advisory Committees at Grades 4, 7, and 10 for 2003 are as follows:

**Grade 4 Advisory Committee**

<b>Name</b>	<b>School/County Affiliation</b>	<b>City</b>
Ruth Acuna	West Bertie Elementary School	Lewiston Woodville
Brenda Alexander	WR Odell Elementary School	Concord
Pan Allen	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	Charlotte
Jennifer Barnes	JP Knapp Elementary School	Currituck
Barbara Carruthers	Timber Drive Elementary School	Garner
Karen Day	Avery's Creek Elementary School	Arden
Vicki Dineen	Issac Dickson Elementary School	Asheville
Jean Goodman	River Mill Academy	Saxapahaw
Valaida Grimes	Elmhurst Elementary School	Greenville
Frances Harris	Onslow County Schools	Jacksonville
Tamara Hutchinson	West Jefferson Elementary School	West Jefferson
Catina Jackson-Hoggard	Rich Square-Creecy Elementary School	Rich Square
Jill Logan	Yadkinville Elementary School	Yadkinville
Stacey Owens-Howard	Pollocksville Elementary School	Pollocksville
Roberta Pearson	Guilford County Schools	Greensboro
Betsy Ray	Hope Valley Elementary School	Durham
Sonja Solomon	North Ridge Elementary School	Raleigh
Shirley Staten	NCDPI—Closing the Achievement Gap	Raleigh
Gary Wadell	Viewmont Elementary School	Hickory
Brad Walker	UNC-Wilmington	Wilmington
Beth Ware	Morrisville Year Round Elementary School	Morrisville
Lisa Wishart	Broadway Elementary School	Broadway

## Grade 7 Advisory Committee

<b>Name</b>	<b>School/County Affiliation</b>	<b>City</b>
Andrea Belletti	Williston Middle School	Wilmington
Leigh Bryan	Andrews Middle School	Andrews
Geraldine Byerly	North Davidson Middle School	Lexington
Elena Candler	Magellan Charter School	Raleigh
Janet Conoly	Southern Middle School	Aberdeen
Debra Elliott	Chowan Middle School	Tyner
Cindy Evans	Southwest Middle School	Jacksonville
LuAnn Gregory	Benson Middle School	Benson
Stephanie Huggins	John R. Griffin Middle School	Fayetteville
Jo Peterson Gibbs	Asheville Middle School	Asheville
Jeanneine Jones	UNC-Charlotte	Charlotte
Sara McCall	Yadkin County Schools	Yadkinville
Jeff Parris	Greene County Middle School	Snow Hill
Penney Sumrell	Tarboro County Schools	Tarboro
Shirley Staten	NCDPI—Closing the Achievement Gap	Raleigh
Jane Teague	Seagrove Elementary	Seagrove
Charlotte Wilson	Lowe's Grove Middle School	Durham

## Grade 10 Advisory Committee

<b>Name</b>	<b>School/County Affiliation</b>	<b>City</b>
Peter Bobbe	Mountain Heritage High School	Burnsville
Jodee Boehm	Providence High School	Charlotte
Davetta Bristow	Smith High School	Greensboro
Nancy Carolan	Governor Morehead School	Raleigh
Deanie Dunbar	Matamuskeet High School	Swan Quarter
Dara Eberly	Brevard High School	Brevard
Guy Hill	Triton High School	Erwin
Polly Jones	Ashe County High School	West Jefferson
Michelle Lourcey	South Iredell High School	Statesville
Melody McKithan	Fairmont High School	Fairmont
Bettina Pope	Wake Forest-Rolesville High School	Wake Forest
Vickey Ratchford	Lincoln County Schools	Lincolnton
Jan Reid	John T Hoggard High School	Wilmington
Will Smith	River Mill Academy	Saxapahaw
Shirley Staten	NCDPI—Closing the Achievement Gap	Raleigh
Mary Warner	Western Carolina University	Cullowhee