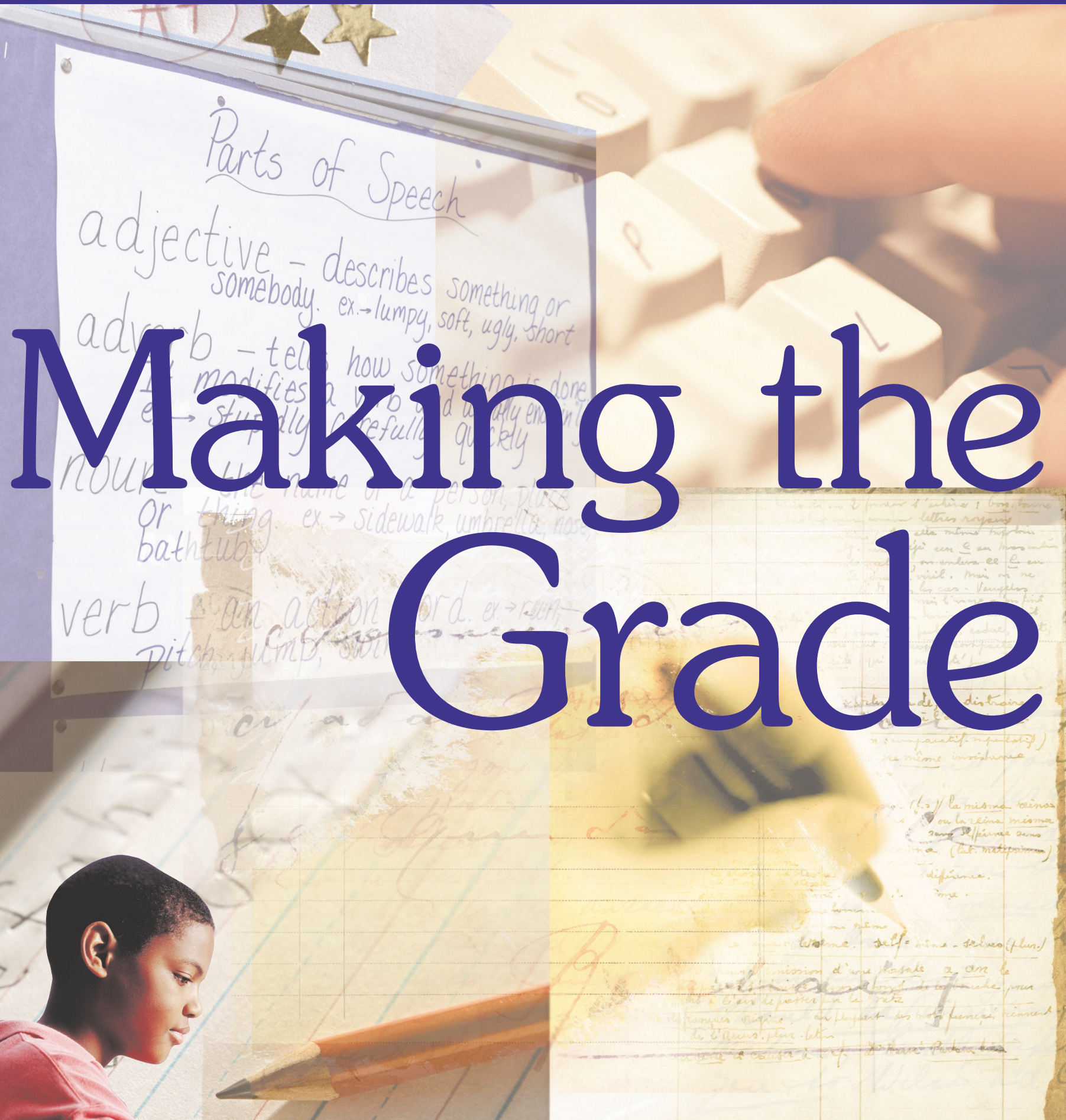


# WRITING THROUGH THE GRADES



# Making the Grade

The North Carolina Student Accountability Standards establish Gateways for Writing in Grades 5 and 8. Gateways are points at which students must demonstrate proficiency. In addition to state standards, students are responsible for meeting local promotion requirements.

## PARENTS & GUARDIANS OFTEN HAVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WRITING GATEWAYS:

### What role do writing assessments play in the Gateways?

Statewide writing assessments are administered on specified test days for students in grades 4 and 7. Students in grade 4 write a narrative essay that may be personal or imaginative. Students in grade 7 write an expository (clarification or point-of-view) essay.

Students demonstrate proficiency in writing by scoring a 2.5 or higher on a 4-point scale for these writing assessments. Students who do not score 2.5 must be given focused intervention and assistance to enhance their writing skills. To be promoted a student must demonstrate “adequate progress” in writing by the end of the 5th and 8th grades. Local education agencies are responsible for developing a plan for schools to determine if a student has made adequate progress to be promoted to the next grade. Local plans may include provisions for different types of writing as part of a student’s portfolio to demonstrate overall progress in writing.

### What should be included in a good writing program?

Students should make connections between their reading and their writing. They should read and write daily, learning how to write so they consider the reader of their writing (the audience). Students need to write a variety of types of text, and they need to use different types of writing for a variety of audiences and purposes. While some writing assignments should involve writing to the type of prompt on the writing assessments, students should have opportunities to write the following kinds of text:

Newspaper articles	Technical writing	Editorials & other opinion pieces
Advertisements	Reports	Writing to learn: science, math, social studies, arts, foreign language, etc.
Journals	Posters	Learning logs or diary entries
Commercials	Song Lyrics	Dialogue and conversation
Reviews	Research	Historical “you are there” documentaries
Creative writing	Letters	

Students should also have the opportunity to write for real audiences. Thus, they should be expected to share their writing in many ways, including:

Posting on bulletin boards	Entering literary magazines and other contests
Reading aloud or taping their stories	Exchanging with other classes/schools
Compiling class books	Writing letters to real people
Contributing to school newspapers	

### Since the state assessment is on-demand writing, should students focus entirely on this kind of writing?

On-demand writing (where students are given a specified amount of time and asked to write on a particular topic) is one component of a strong writing program, which should include a variety of approaches and assignments. While students may need additional assistance in planning and in time management for on-demand writing, they also should be practicing writing skills in assignments that are not time limited and that ask them to go through the process of planning, composing a rough draft, revising their writing, and then sharing what they have written.

### Does the student need to demonstrate adequate progress in the specific type of writing assessed by the state or in writing overall?

State Board of Education policy does not specify a particular type of writing on which a student’s progress is to be judged. Consistent through all levels of writing assessment in North Carolina, the four criteria of Main Idea, Supporting Detail, Organization, and Coherence are the foundations of effective writing. No student should focus solely on one mode or type of writing. However, the type of writing used to determine if a student has made adequate progress remains a local decision.

The North Carolina Standards establish Gateway in Grades 5 and 8. Gateway at which students must demonstrate proficiency. In addition, students are responsible for promotion requirements.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR THE

### You should expect your kindergarten child to:

- Write most letters of the alphabet.
- Write with temporary and conventional spelling.
- Write to express ideas.

### You should expect your first grade child to:

- Write all upper and lower case letters correctly.
- Use phonics and spelling patterns to spell three and four letter words.
- Use basic capitalization and punctuation when writing.
- Write in a variety of forms: stories, journal entries, letters, response logs, simple poems, etc.
- Write independently using temporary and conventional spelling.

### You should expect your second grade child to:

- Write in a variety of forms (stories, reports, etc.)
- Write using formal language.
- Correctly spell, using previously studied words and spelling patterns.
- Attend to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and format in final drafts of writing.



Student Accountability  
Gateways for Writing  
Gateways are points  
that demonstrate  
how to state standards,  
and are for meeting local  
needs.

## THE EARLY YEARS

### Newspaper Activities for Students in Kindergarten through Grade 2:

Use a favorite section of the newspaper to do all of these tasks. Circle capital and lower case letters in news articles. Number paragraphs. Circle periods. Put a square around question marks. Put an X on exclamation points. Number the paragraphs in a story.

Cut out letters from the newspaper to spell your name. Paste the name on a sign or poster to display. Or spell the names of other people in your family and make a placemat for each person. Add other pictures or words to your poster or placemat that tell about each person.

Cut out a picture of a famous athlete, movie star, politician or other person. Write (or draw) what you would say to this person and what the person might say to you.

Think of things that have happened to your family and friends. Using drawings, photos and your writing, create your own newspaper. Or work with a friend and create a neighborhood newspaper. Develop a story about a newspaper photo. Discuss what happened before the photo was taken and what will happen next. Write an exciting first line for the story you created.



## EXPECTATIONS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEARS

### You should expect your child in grades 3–5 to:

- Plan and organize ideas before beginning to write.
- Compose a rough draft that focuses on major ideas and details.
- Revise written work, focusing on aspects of writing such as organization, word choice, and clarity.
- Edit written work to use correct grammatical conventions, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Use writing as a tool for thinking, learning, and reflecting.
- Write to inform, to persuade, and to tell a story.
- Write a variety of literary, informational, and practical texts (fairy tales, poetry, recipes, news articles, interviews, etc.).
- Use media and technology as a tool in writing.

### Newspaper Activities for Students in Grades 3–5:

You'll find many stories about interesting people in the newspaper. Read one and then interview someone whom you know and write an interesting story or profile about your chosen person.

Think of and then write down variations on words that you find in the newspaper (for example, "impose, imposing, imposition").

Cut out words or photos that will complete a set of sentences, such as: "I want... I need... I like... I dislike... I have... I am concerned about..."

Locate a recipe in the food section. After reading the recipe and looking at the format in which it is written, write a step-by-step explanation of how to prepare a favorite family dish. Be precise in giving measurements.

Find a story about people who need help. Talk about and write ways that you and others may be able to help.

Think as if you were a reporter. Choose someone in the newspaper and write questions that you'd ask that person if you were a reporter.

Read the front page stories of a newspaper online. Pretend you are a television reporter with 20 seconds to summarize today's news. Write the report and time yourself presenting the news.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

### You should expect students in grades 6–8 to:

- Write for a variety of different audiences.
- Write for a variety of purposes, including the following:
  - exploring personal insights and experiences (autobiographies, diaries, journals, learning logs, letters).
  - giving information (definitions, instructions, reports, news articles, research).
  - persuading (speeches, letters to the editor, debates, editorials).
  - interpreting and judging ideas or information (media or book reviews, essays, analysis of literature).
- Use analytical, critical, and/or creative thinking in writing.
- Use logical organization and clear transition between ideas.
- Use elaboration to clarify central ideas.
- Present their written work in one-to-one interactions, group meeting, and classroom discussions.
- Write with correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalization.
- Select and use technological tools for writing class assignments.

### Newspaper Activities for Middle School Students:

Have fun with comic strips. Choose a favorite and write the conversation in dialogue using quotation marks. Or, create your own strip using your favorite cartoon characters. Explain where and when the action takes place and write one or more conversations among your selected characters. Follow a strip and write what happens each day along with an insight gained from your reading. Look for slang, jargon, and dialect.

In classifieds, circle a job that interests you. After taking note of the qualifications, write a letter in which you describe your qualifications for this type of job. Or you can write a classified ad, advertising your services.

Advice columns of all kinds appear in newspapers. Find and read one in your newspaper. Then find someone in the newspaper who has a problem—or think about someone you know who has a

problem. Write a letter as if you were that person. Or write a letter in which you ask for advice. Does writing the letter help you realize possible solutions?

Newspapers invite readers to submit letters, responding to issues in the news. It is one way that community members talk to each other. Look through the newspaper and identify an issue that concerns you. Write a letter to the editor and send it to your newspaper. Follow the rules outlined on the editorial page of your newspaper. The letter must be of a certain length and must be signed. No anonymous opinions are accepted.

Read sports headlines and look for action words (such as smashed or rallied) that signal whether a team won or lost. Think of, and then write down, other words that can be used in their place. Think about how different words give readers a slightly different impression of what happened.

# EXPECTATIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

## You should expect students in high school to:

- Write for a variety of purposes, including the following:
  - Exploring personal insights and experiences (memoirs, narratives, reflections, reminiscence, vignettes).
  - Giving information (news articles, historical documents, research).
  - Persuading (speeches, letters to the editor, debates, editorials).
  - Interpreting and evaluating ideas or information (media or book reviews, essays, literary analysis).
- Write text that demonstrates reflection and insight as well as analytical, critical, or evaluative thinking.
- Use convincing elaboration and development of details to clarify central ideas.
- Use logical organization and effective transition that are appropriate to the type of writing.
- Write with personal style or voice.
- Write with correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
- Select and use technological tools in writing class assignments and projects.



## Newspaper Activities for High School Students:

Keep a journal and reflect on events that you read about in the news or use your journal differently. Follow someone who interests you such as the president, governor, a local official, or a favorite sports figure. Write what the newspaper reports on the person's activities, proposals, and decisions. Save photos too. Choose words that are new to you. Cut out the paragraph where the words appear and define them using a dictionary. Then elaborate. You might write the definition in your own words, compare it to another word that you know, or write a sentence with the word.

Choose a story that involves several people or groups. Think about the different points of view. Write how each might respond.

Using classifieds, outline and then write a description of two automobiles, comparing the benefits to you and/or your family.

Read over the movie ads and the short and long reviews and summaries that appear in newspapers. Go to one of the movies and then write your own review in which you state why someone who has not seen the movie should or should not watch it.

Select an editorial cartoon about a subject that is familiar to you. What is the cartoonist saying? Design your own cartoon about something that concerns you. Sign your cartoon as if you were a cartoonist.

## Making the Grade: Writing Through The Grades

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