

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: 2009-2010 Writing Instruction Plan

Type of Executive Summary:

- Action
- Action on First Reading
- Discussion
- Information

Policy Implications:

- Constitution _____
- General Statute # _____
- SBE Policy # _____
- SBE Policy Amendment
- SBE Policy (New)
- APA # _____
- APA Amendment
- APA (New)
- Other _____

Presenter(s): Dr. Rebecca Garland (Chief Academic Officer, Academic Services and Instructional Support) and Ms. Angela Quick (Deputy Chief Academic Officer, Curriculum, Instruction, Technology and Accountability Services)

Description:

In June 2008, the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) adopted "A Framework for Change: The Next Generation of Assessments and Accountability" and subsequently directed the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to develop a new writing instruction system that would replace the annual on-demand writing tests at grades 4, 7, and 10 and to elevate the importance of writing throughout the K-12 curriculum. The new K-12 writing system includes authentic and on-demand writing assignments that mirror 21st century skills.

In 2008-2009, students in grades 4 and 7 were asked to complete two content-specific writing assignments and two on-demand writing tasks. Students in grade 7 used word processing tools in order to complete their assignments. Most students in grades 4 and 7 housed their work in paper portfolios. Students in 19 pilot sites stored their work in an electronic portfolio. The SBE will hear findings from the first year of the writing project as well receive a proposal for the 2009-2010 writing instruction system.

Resources:

N/A

Input Process:

Teacher surveys, on-site visits, stakeholder meetings

Stakeholders:

LEAs, administrators, teachers, students, parents

Timeline For Action:

This item was presented for Discussion in April and is returned for Action in May.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the Department's proposal for the 2009-2010 writing instructional system.

Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:

- Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)
Specify: _____

- Audio Requirements (computer or other, except for PA system which is provided)
Specify: _____

Document Camera (for transparencies or paper documents – white paper preferred)

Motion By: _____ Seconded By: _____
Vote: Yes _____ No _____ Abstain _____
Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Postponed _____ Revised _____

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NC Writing Instruction System Pilot
Lessons Learned and Proposed Adjustments for 2009-2010
Globally Competitive Students Committee - May 2009
Action

Overview

Consistent with the State Board of Education's (SBE) June 2008 mandate that the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) "change the current approach to writing assessment,"¹ DPI developed and piloted the new NC Writing Instruction System (System) in the fall of 2008. Feedback from the field regarding the new System has thus far been mixed, with several clear messages emerging regarding what needs to change to improve the System, the means by which it is implemented, and the manner in which DPI supports LEAs in their implementation. To facilitate the SBE's discussion regarding the envisioned rollout of the System in 2009-10, this document will summarize the following:

- Details from the guiding *Framework for Change* directive
- DPI's vision for the System, including its intended goals
- Emerging findings from the ongoing 2008-09 System pilot
- Proposed implementation of the System for 2009-2010

Details of the *Framework for Change* Directive

The June 2008 SBE mandate that DPI "change the current approach to writing assessment" was further qualified by the following specific directives:

1. To elevate the importance of writing throughout the curriculum, replace the current 4th, 7th, and 10th grade writing assessments with a K-12 writing assessment system that includes authentic and on-demand writing assignments, appropriate to each grade level and backmapped from the graduation project.
2. Provide LEAs with rubrics that are aligned with the writing rubric used for the graduation project to use in assessing the K-12 writing assignments.
3. Provide for assessments to be housed and scored locally, and for DPI staff to conduct random audits to ensure that LEAs are employing the new assessment system appropriately.
4. Provide training and professional development to educators to ensure fidelity to the writing assessment process at each grade level.

Note that while the SBE mandate spoke explicitly of "assessment," DPI has interpreted that mandate to focus on "instruction," since assessment is a component of the instructional process. DPI has chosen to use "instruction" in naming the System to avoid confusing it with high-stakes testing, which it is not. This interpretation is consistent

¹ SBE Framework for Change (June 5, 2008), Immediate Improvement #7, p.4.

with the Framework's directive to incorporate diagnostic/formative assessment into the state-guided instructional landscape.

Vision for the NC Writing Instruction System

Consistent with the SBE directive, DPI developed a vision for how to *ensure that students develop the writing skills needed to communicate effectively*.

The new System is built around the following guiding principles:

- To be competitive in 21st Century academic and/or occupational environments, a student must be able to communicate effectively through writing.
- Every student can learn to write effectively.
- Principles of effective writing are known and can therefore guide instruction regarding how to write effectively.
- The SBE must promote instructional practices that will produce students who can write effectively.
- The constructive drafting-and-revising writing process is an essential instructional practice.
- Writing instruction must be integrated into the content-based courses of instruction and be ongoing throughout the school year (rather than being a single-day event). Consequently, the System should not add new tasks and assignments to what is currently asked of students in many classrooms throughout the state.
- All educators in a school building should be involved in crafting and implementing the building's plan for a coherent, integrated approach to writing instruction.
- Assignments and tasks should ...
 - be of instructional value.
 - be meaningful and interesting to students.
 - be locally evaluated using state rubric.
 - produce immediate feedback that can be used to adjust instructional goals and delivery.

Note on Accountability

The information that students, teachers, and schools receive from the writing System in 2008-09 and 2009-10 is intended to support the instructional process. This information will not be included in the formalized statewide accountability model. Currently, the 10th grade writing assessment is the only measure of writing included in the statewide accountability model. DPI may, in the future, conduct a standardized pulse-check on student achievement in writing using a sampling model similar to that used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing assessment but the System is exclusively for instructional purposes.

Goals of the NC Writing Instruction System

- To encourage **student writing throughout the school year.**
- To encourage **writing to be taught and assessed in all content areas.**
- To support schools in the use of writing **as part of a formative assessment process** that informs instruction.
- To support schools and teachers in gathering local **benchmark and summative writing** data.
- To build a **school-level, shared understanding** of what constitutes clear, concise, and purposeful writing.
- To encourage educators to engage students in **complex, real-world writing assignments.**
- To encourage writing **to be taught through the use of an authentic writing process** involving draft-and-revise cycles and not as a preparation for a single, on-demand test.
- To electronically collect, through a centrally-hosted online portfolio system, ongoing student writing samples that allow **educators to access student performance information** in order to modify instructional goals and delivery.
- To **provide educators an electronic system that will assist in providing timely feedback to students and parents** on student writing performance.
- To **encourage schools to build the capacity and scheduling practices necessary to administer assignments and tasks online**
- To **evaluate the need for future professional development programs in writing instruction** by analyzing actual student writing samples and educator scoring data.

2008-2009 NC Writing Instruction System Pilot: Emerging Findings

DPI is compiling findings from the pilot after reviewing and discussing feedback gathered through:

- School site visits
- LEA conference calls
- Onsite meetings
- Email questions and correspondence
- 5,000+ survey responses on the new Writing Instruction System pilot

The findings are preliminary, as many schools are still in the actual implementation.

Most important emerging trend in the feedback: Communication about purpose, logistics and implementation can be improved.

Teachers, administrators, and other LEA staff have provided valuable constructive criticism that will aid DPI in making adjustments to the System in the 2009-10 school year. Though many respondents have expressed that the change in focus to more authentic and integrated writing is a positive step, many LEAs have suggested that the time and effort needed to execute a plan of this magnitude was taxing on schools, especially since the school year had already begun. While the time line in 2009-2010 will mitigate some of the challenges, many of the challenges in execution must be addressed through better communication about the purpose of the new System and through provision of better tools to support implementation.

In order to address some of the LEAs' concerns, DPI has identified initial trends in the LEA feedback and has proposed measures to assist with the implementation of the System during the 2009-10 school year. These trends and proposed measures for addressing them are listed in the table on the following page.

Trend or Finding	Proposed Solutions	
<p>Clarity of Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of the System was not always clear to LEAs. Consequently, LEAs have implemented the System in ways other than how it was intended. In many cases, this has taken the form of treating the assignments more as tightly controlled standardized assessments than as authentic, classroom writing assignments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earlier and more organized communication about the purpose of the System. Revised professional development focusing on achieving clarity of purpose of the System and the implications of the focus on instruction. 	
<p>Time from Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School personnel have expressed concern about the amount of time devoted to the System. Many have suggested that it monopolized instruction time and/or required reorganization of the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making clear through resource guide that the writing that is already assigned within the classroom is the writing that can be captured in the System. Revised professional development - integrating the writing system into the current curriculum. 	<p><i>Comprehensive Guide to the Writing Instruction System</i></p>
<p>Time to Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers articulated dissatisfaction with the time involved in scoring the on-demand tasks and content assignments, especially before they reached proficiency with the rubrics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requiring only a single scorer for on-demand for 2009-2010 (with option of dual-scorers for schools interested in determining how consistent teachers are in the use of the writing rubrics). 	<p>Including detailed descriptions of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *purpose *components *implementation options
<p>Proficiency in Scoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers expressed unease about the clarity of the rubrics and preparedness to score the assignments. Those responsible for scoring requested more information and examples of scoring, especially for content assignments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing multiple content area anchor and training sets in module two (<i>Assessing Writing Skills in the 21st Century</i>) of the PD Moodle. Revised professional development around scoring and rubrics. Revision and update of professional development Moodle. 	<p>This guide will emphasize using the online portfolio system to gather student work, provide feedback and determine trends in the achievement data. It will be a one-stop answer to all questions about writing.</p>
<p>Content Area Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some survey responders requested additional training and information about how to teach content writing and how to seamlessly integrate the writing system in the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision and addition to Instructional Writing Moodle. 	
<p>Computer Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEAs articulated difficulty arranging computer access for writing. LEAs expressed concern about monopolizing computers, scheduling conflicts and student preparedness for writing on the computer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish 'best practices' from the field on successful use of technology in writing. Allow LEAs/schools to self-select into online pilot for the 2009-2010 school year. 	

Proposed Implementation of Writing Instruction System for 2009-2010

	2008-2009 Pilot	Proposed for 2009-2010	Rationale for Decision
What is assessed?	Two content-specific assignments and two on-demand tasks.	Two content-specific assignments and two on-demand tasks. The first on-demand tasks will be diagnostic or benchmarking depending on school preference.	Initially the plan was to have four content-specific assignments in 2009-2010. Given the challenges heard from the field around logistics, we are proposing to keep the same number of assignments.
Who will participate?	General education and NCEXTEND 2 students in grades 4 and 7.	General education, NCCLAS and NCEXTEND 2 students in grades 4 and 7.	Inclusion of all populations following the standard course of study in the writing system.
Who will use the electronic system to score and store student assignments?	18 Pilot LEAs	Open to all LEAs or schools that wish to take advantage of the system.	Given both local school logistical capacity as well as budget, we will not mandate that the electronic system be used by all.
When will student writing assignments be composed, collected and scored?	1 On-demand in the Fall 1 Content-specific in the Fall 1 Content-specific in the Spring 1 On-demand in the Spring	On-demand - Sept/Oct Content-specific - Nov/Dec Content-specific – Jan/Feb On-demand – Mar/Apr	The dates are suggested but very much flexible. The first on-demand may be used as a diagnostic/pre-test in the early fall or may be used around mid-term as a benchmark of progress.
Where can the on-demand tasks take place?	In classrooms or computer labs	In classrooms or computer labs	Teachers are encouraged to give this assignment in a small group or individual setting. The environment should be controlled enough so as to ensure that the child is doing his or her own independent work.
Where can the content-specific assignments take place?	Classrooms Computer-Labs Media Centers Home Anywhere a child would do school work	Classrooms Computer-Labs Media Centers Home Anywhere a child would do school work	The content-specific assignment is not to be completed at “one-sitting” but instead an authentic writing assignment using the draft-and-revise cycle.

	2008-2009 Pilot	Proposed for 2009-2010	Rationale for Decision
How will the writing be scored?	2 scores for on-demand writing (both scoring the features and conventions) 2 scores for content-specific writing (1 of content and 1 of features/conventions)	1 score for on-demand (scoring the features and conventions) 2 scores for content-specific (1 of content and 1 of features)	Given the concern about time to score papers, the on-demand will be scored only once. The System will still have the capability of capturing multiple scores on assignments/tasks for the purposes of developing consistency around the rubric or checking the reliability of scoring. LEAs will continue to have the option of using this feature.
Who chooses and gives the content-specific writing assignments?	Teachers, LEA personnel	Teachers in consultation with students and in alignment with their long-term plan to teach the SCOS.	It is important to make the content-specific assignments a natural part of the SCOS for that particular content-area and, whenever possible, engage students in choosing topics that will engage them in writing.
Who provides the on-demand tasks?	NCDPI	NCDPI	Consistency state-wide.
What are the restrictions on word processing tools?	None on content-specific; Disabled spell-checker, etc. on the on-demand.	No restrictions on word processing tools on either on-demand tasks or content-specific assignments.	Students can safely assume the availability of these tools in the future when writing. This choice mirrors authentic writing scenarios and the future NAEP writing assessment.
What types of data will be available to schools?	Student score data	Student score data	This function of the System will allow schools to look at scores disaggregated in many different ways. In the electronic pilot, educators will be able to view the actual student work and how it was scored and use this information as a basis for professional development.

	2008-2009 Pilot	Proposed for 2009-2010	Rationale for Decision
Who will lead the implementation of the System at the LEA level?	LEA Test Coordinator	LEA Instructional Leaders	The focus of the writing system is instruction and therefore will lie with the instructional leader in the LEA. Testing and Tech Support staff will help with the implementation of the online system.
What resources will schools have to guide successful implementation?	Online Professional Development, Q+A, Writing TIPS, Test Admin Guide, Website	Additional and revised online PD courses; Complete, consolidated resource guide to assist in implementation.	Will eliminate misunderstandings about implementation and scoring from the pilot year. Will increase focus on writing instruction. Will fill gaps in curriculum guidance and online system operation.
Will the data from the system be used in the accountability model?	No (neither the ABCs nor AYP)	No (neither the ABCs nor AYP)	The purpose of the North Carolina Writing Instruction System is to inform instruction and not for school-level accountability. The System includes auditing capabilities and the use of a NAEP-type sampling of student responses may be considered in the future.



Public Schools of North Carolina

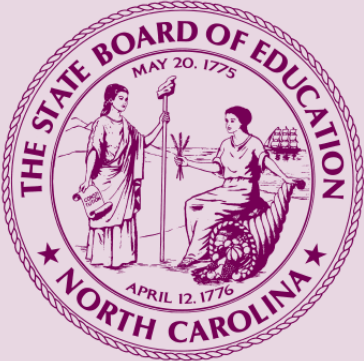
NC Writing Instruction System Pilot

Lessons Learned
and Proposed Adjustments for 2009-2010

Background

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE:
The Next Generation of
Assessments and Accountability



June 5, 2008

SBE's
Framework For Change



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

08-09 Writing Assessment Proposal
August 2008

August 2008 Pilot Plan



Background

NC Writing Instruction & Assessment System Pilot
Lessons Learned and Proposed Adjustments for 2009-2010
Globally Competitive Students Committee - April 2009
Draft for Discussion

Overview

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SBE Framework for Change (June 5, 2008), Immediate Improvement #1, p.4

March 19, 2009
NC DPI ASSESSMENT

April 2009

Initial Findings and Proposal

Includes...

- Revisiting and Updating Purpose
- Lessons We Are Learning
- Proposed Adjustments



What's in a Name?

2008-2009

**NC Writing
Assessment
System**

2009-2010

**NC Writing
Instructional
System**



Our **Purpose** is to encourage...

- Writing throughout the school year
- Writing across all content areas
- Formative writing assessment to inform instruction
- A shared understanding of good writing
- Complex, real-world assignments



Our **Purpose** is to encourage...

- An authentic draft-and-revise cycle
- Collection and use of writing and scores via electronic portfolio
- Timely feedback to students and parents
- Local capacity to deliver online assessments



Feedback Regarding the Pilot

- Survey data – 5,200+ responses
- Email
- Comments from...
 - Site visits to schools
 - Regional meetings
 - Professional development
 - Conference calls and outreach
 - External education groups



Trends and Lessons Learned

Most important positive trend in the feedback:



Many in the field support a shift from a single, on-demand assessment to a year-long instruction and assessment system.



Trends and Lessons Learned

Most important emerging critical trend
in the feedback:



Communication about purpose,
logistics, and implementation can be
improved.



Other Specific Critical Trends

- Clarity of Purpose
- Time from Instruction
- Time to Score
- Proficiency in Scoring
- Content Area Writing
- Computer Access



Based on Feedback

How will we adjust the system?

What is assessed?

2008-09

2 on-demand
+ 2 content- specific
= 4 collected assignments

2009-10

Remaining the same
instead of increasing to 4
content-specific

Who will use the electronic system?

2008-09

18 LEAs in electronic pilot

2009-10

**Electronic pilot open to all
interested LEAs**



Based on Feedback

How will we adjust the system?

Who will participate?

2008-09

General education and
NCEXTEND 2 students in
grades 4 and 7

2009-10

General education,
NCCLAS and NCEXTEND 2
students in grades 4 and 7

When will student writing assignments be composed?

2008-09

In theory...

- 1 On-demand in the Fall
- 1 Content-specific in the Fall
- 1 Content-specific in the Spring
- 1 On-demand in the Spring

2009-10

Flexible Windows



Based on Feedback

How will we adjust the system?

How will the assignments be scored?

2008-09

2 scores for on-demand
(both scoring the features
and conventions)

2 scores for content-specific
(1 of content and 1 of
features/conventions)

2009-10

1 score for on-demand
(scoring the features and
conventions)

2 scores for content-specific
(1 of content and 1 of
features/conventions)



Based on Feedback

How will we adjust the system?

Who chooses the content-specific writing assignments?

2008-09

Teachers, LEA personnel

2009-10

**Teachers in consultation
with students**

What are the restrictions on word processing tools?

2008-09

None on content-specific;
Disabled spell-checker on
the on-demand

2009-10

**No restrictions on word
processing tools on
assignments**



Based on Feedback

How will we adjust the system?

What data will be available to schools?

2008-09

Student score data

2009-10

Student score data +
additional data TBD

Who will lead the implementation at the LEA level?

2008-09

LEA Test Coordinator

2009-10

LEA **Instructional Leaders**



Based on Feedback

What resources are being developed?

- Updated online professional development including anchor sets for content-specific assignments
- A single comprehensive guide including...
 - On-Demand “How To”
 - Content-Specific “How To”
 - Guidelines for Using Data to Inform Instruction

