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ABSTRACT

The writing samples presented in this paper were selected from the portfolios of fourth-grade Vermont students as examples of the various points in Vermont's newly revised analytic writing assessment guide. The benchmark writing pieces in the paper, when used with the analytic assessment guide that begins the paper, are guideposts for assessing student work. The paper presents four benchmark pieces for each of the five "dimensions" of writing: purpose, organization, details, voice or tone, and grammar/usage/mechanics. Each benchmark piece is accompanied by a chart indicating whether the piece extensively, frequently, sometimes, or rarely incorporates the five dimensions of writing. A student writing sample forms the cover pages for the paper. (RS)

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4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

When I was about 5 or 6 my dad made some macaroni and cheese. Well, it didn't turn out like macaroni and cheese. It turned out like rubber. At first Dad tried to cut it. That didn't work. Finally he got it cut and served. After I cut my piece I tried to pry it off my plate. Winnnggg! It went flying backwards and hit my dog Taco on the head. Then my mom tried but it was glued to her plate. So was my dad's. Then last but not least Jared (my brother) tried. Winnngg! Splat! It stuck to the ceiling. Then all of a sudden, plop! It fell onto the table. After we cleaned up and gave Taco a bath mom told dad what kind of cheese to use. Ever since then dad has never cooked macaroni and cheese again.

2. D. D. Juelz #2 (Soft)

Vermont Department of Education

Purpose: Purpose refers to how adequately the author's intent is established and maintained within the writing. The purpose should stand on its own within a piece of writing, and not be dependent upon the reader's knowledge of the actual writing assignment. "Purpose" implies the purpose *within* the writing, rather than the purpose *of* the writing. Important factors that may contribute to the author's success in establishing and maintaining purpose include: consistent awareness of **audience**; consistent **focus** that is appropriate to the audience and the purpose.

Organization: Organization is the degree to which the writer's work illustrates unity and coherence. Writing that displays "unity" does not leave ideas or information hanging; "coherence" exists when sentences are logically and clearly related to one another, and appropriate transitions move the piece forward.

Details: Details contribute to the development of ideas, provide information, evoke images, and elaborate or clarify the content of the writing. When details are "elaborated," they are not simply listed: they advance the purpose of the writing!

Voice or Tone: Voice is the personality of a piece of writing. Tone is the attitude toward the subject, and should vary according to audience, purpose, genre and form. For example, a personal narrative may have a compelling voice and a research paper may have an engaging tone; both can reflect the personal involvement and choice of the author. One way to check for voice is to read a piece aloud: does it have a conversational tone, or a sense of unique involvement? In looking for appropriate tone, ask whether the writing projects a sense of authority or a stance that is consistent to the writing's purpose.

Grammar/Usage/Mechanics: the conventions of writing. In some cases, the writer may intentionally depart from conventional English; where such departure is effective, the writer may be judged to "show command of G/U/M." Where lapses from conventional English are not intentional, the reader should look for patterns. A single word, misspelled once or throughout a piece of writing, counts as a single error; when several words are misspelled, a "pattern of errors" is noted. Similarly, a single type of punctuation error throughout a piece should count as a single error; a variety of punctuation errors constitutes a "pattern." Writing at the "sometimes" level has errors that "distract" the reader — note that these are errors of Grammar/Usage/Mechanics, not of organization or purpose. In a "rarely" piece, the G/U/M errors not only distract, they interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Vermont Writing Assessment

Analytic Assessment Guide

Grammar/Usage/Mechanics

Voice or Tone

Details

Organization

Purpose

...the conventions of writing, including:
 *Grammar (e.g. sentence structure, syntax)
 *Usage (e.g. agreement and word choice)
 *Mechanics (e.g. spelling, capitalization, punctuation)

...whether the writing displays a natural style, appropriate to the narrator or whether the tone of the writing is appropriate to its content

...whether details develop ideas or information
 ...whether details elaborate or clarify the content of the writing with images, careful explanation, effective dialogue, parenthetical expressions, stage directions, etc

...coherence:
 whether ideas or information are in logical sequence or move the piece forward
 whether sentences and images are clearly related to each other (indenting paragraphs is a matter of Grammar/Usage/Mechanics)

...how adequately intent and focus are established and maintained (success in this criterion should not depend on the reader's knowledge of the writing assignment: the writing should stand on its own)

Ask how consistently, relative to length and complexity...

intent is established and maintained within a given piece of writing

details contribute to development of ideas and information, evoke images or otherwise elaborate or clarify the content of the writing

the writing demonstrates coherence

As appropriate to grade level, command of conventions is evident, through correct English or intentional effective departure from conventions

an appropriate voice or tone is established and maintained

Extensively

Establishes and maintains a clear purpose and focus.

Details are pertinent, vivid or explicit and provide ideas/information in depth.

Distinctive personal expression or distinctive tone enhances the writing.

Few or no errors present, or departures from convention appear intentional and are effective

Frequently

Establishes a purpose and focus.

Organization moves writing forward with few lapses in unity or coherence.

Details develop ideas/information; or details are elaborated.

Establishes personal expression or effective tone.

Some errors or patterns of errors are present

Yes

No

Is author's focus clear within the writing?

Yes

No

Does the organization move the writing forward?

Yes

No

Do details enhance and/or clarify the writing?

Yes

No

Can you hear the writer? Or, is the tone effective?

Yes

No

Does writing show grade-appropriate command of G/U/M?

Sometimes

Attempts to establish a purpose; focus of writing is not fully clear.

Lapse(s) in organization affect unity or coherence.

Attempts personal expression or appropriate tone.

Numerous errors are apparent and may distract the reader.

Rarely

Purpose and focus not apparent.

Serious errors in organization make writing difficult to follow.

Personal expression or appropriate tone not evident.

Errors interfere with understanding

NON-SCORABLE

* Is illegible: i.e., includes so many indecipherable words that no sense can be made of the writing, or
 * Is incoherent: i.e., words are legible but syntax is so garbled that response makes no sense, or
 * Is a blank piece of paper
 * For Portfolio: Does not have required minimum contents

Introduction

The writing samples that follow were selected from the portfolios of fourth grade Vermont students as examples of the various points on Vermont's newly-revised analytic writing assessment guide. These benchmark writing pieces, when used with the analytic assessment guide, are guideposts for assessing student work.

The Vermont Department of Education expresses its deep gratitude to the anonymous student authors of the following pieces, and to their teachers and parents for granting us permission to publish these works.

The Department also wishes to recognize the considerable efforts of its writing network leaders and especially to thank those network leaders who served on the 1994 benchmarking committees:

Fourth Grade

Betty Boudreau
Susan Collins
Nioka Houston
Jeanne Korstange
Shayne Trubisz
Ann Rex
Susan Biggam

Eighth Grade

Andrew Green
Hasse Halley
Gordon Korstange
Irina Markova
Joyce Roof
Joan Simmons
Mimi Brailsford
Geof Hewitt

Table of Contents

4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

Benchmarks for "Purpose"

- 5 Fuzzy Shadow
- 7 Printers
- 9 The Seaturtle King
- 10 Christmas in Italy

Benchmarks for "Organization"

- 13 Grandfather's Boat
- 15 Sugar
- 16 The Most Money I've Ever Found
- 18 Elf

Benchmarks for "Details"

- 22 Reading
- 23 We Became Friends
- 24 The Wildemess
- 26 Macaroni and Cheese

Benchmarks for "Voice or Tone"

- 28 Riboflavin
- 29 Rhythum and Shoes
- 30 The Great Closet Discovery
- 32 The Box

Benchmarks for "Grammar/Usage/Mechanics"

- 35 Oldest Brother
- 37 Mr. Botts
- 38 Rhythem and Shoes
- 39 The Rage of Clue

Purpose	
In assessing, consider...	...how adequately intent and focus are established and maintained (success in this criterion should not depend on the reader's knowledge of the writing assignment: the writing should stand on its own)
Ask how consistently, relative to length and complexity...	intent is established and maintained within a given piece of writing
Extensively	Establishes and maintains a clear purpose and focus.
Frequently	Establishes a purpose and focus.
<div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> Yes </div> <p><i>Is author's focus clear within the writing?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> No </div> </div>	
Sometimes	Attempts to establish a purpose; focus of writing is not fully clear.
Rarely	Purpose and focus not apparent.

A Fuzzy Shadow

I bet you now
Joel is eating his
porridge. Hey! What
do you know? Here
comes Joel now
with two apples.

I bet there for
me and El. Hey!

They are. Now, he
wants me to eat
one. Yum! This is
sweet.

Hey! Maybe if i do
my sound effects he will
take me with him.

Oh I wish I could go
with Joel. Hey! Well;
he comes and the gate
is open. I hope he will
take me too.

Fuzzy shadow

P- It's possible to figure out that this is about a horse, but it is very confusing. Not an apparent focus to the piece.

O- Not easily followed. Sentences and images are not clearly related to each other. Use of "Hey" seems to signal a jump, but it doesn't help the reader.

G/U/M Some errors, but they do not distract the reader.

Fuzzy Shadow					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently					✓
Sometimes		✓		✓	
Rarely	Purpose and focus not apparent		✓		

Printers

Printers copy things so you don't have to write them a hundred times. Copiers are not very effective to anyone they are pretty helpful by themselves. Copiers were invented in 1884. Copiers are invented by Thomas A. Edison. Printers are things that print stuff for you in case you haven't noticed. Copiers can not get better than they are right now because those ones from old foggy age you have to turn and twist so there. The new copiers are ones you just have to push a button and it will do it for you.

4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

Printers

P- Writer seems to have a purpose (describing printers), but the focus is definitely not clear — is the point here to inform, to entertain or to compare?

G/U/M- S Numerous errors relative to length; they do distract

Printers					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently					
Sometimes	Attempts to establish a purpose; focus of writing is not fully clear	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rarely					

The sea turtle king
 The dark, The cold
 The murky waters of the islands like Hawaii
 The squid
 The jelly fish dread
 The brown, The tan
 The shadow black, look.
 The sea turtle king comes to dine
 His bulk a fright,
 His shadow night,
 The other creatures fear his might.
 Their tenderness
 To his delight.

The Seaturtle King

P- The poem has a purpose — creating a murky atmosphere and describing the threat of the sea turtle to the other creatures of the sea. The focus of the poem is not fully clear to some readers without rereading.

O- Writing moves forward, but the first stanza has some lapses that affect coherence (Hawaii... squid)

G/U/M- Inconsistent use of punctuation. Handwriting might bias/distract the reader a little, but F (not S) because G/U/M errors do not distract the reader.

The Seaturtle King					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently	Establishes a purpose and focus	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sometimes					
Rarely					

Christmas in Italy

This is the story of how my Italian ancestors celebrated Christmas in the southern Province of Reggio Calabria, as told to my father by my great-grandfather. On Christmas Eve the whole family would gather at the dinner table and enjoy a dinner of freshly caught codfish or (baccalà) which has been stuffed; and baked and will be served with a Cantipasto or salad with olives, cheese, and peppers. After dinner the family will visit relatives, and friends in the village, and exchange handmade gifts and baked goods. Just before midnight they will join other villagers with crosses, candles, and there will be a procession to the nativity or (presepio) and the children will ring bells and place an infant in the manger to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

Christmas in Italy

P- Establishes and maintains a clear purpose and focus on Italian ancestors' Christmas celebration. Although the description is not elaborated and sophisticated, the piece achieves what it set out to do — meets the descriptors for E.

O- Ideas flow well to support author's purpose and focus.

V/T- Effective tone but not distinctive.

G/U/M- Verb tense changes toward the end; inappropriate use of semicolon, some spelling errors — but writing is easily understood without distraction.

Christmas in Italy					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively	Establishes and maintains a clear purpose and focus	✓			
Frequently			✓	✓	✓
Sometimes					
Rarely					

Organization

**In assessing,
consider...**

...coherence:
...whether Ideas or information
are in logical sequence or move
the piece forward
...whether sentences and images
are clearly related to each other
(Indenting paragraphs is a matter
of Grammar/Usage/Mechanics)

**Ask how
consistently,
relative to length
and complexity...**

the writing demonstrates coher-
ence

Extensively

Organized from beginning to
end, logical progression of ideas,
fluent and coherent.

Frequently

Organization moves writing
forward with few lapses in unity
or coherence.

Yes

**Does the organization
move the writing
forward?**

No

Sometimes

Lapse(s) in organization affect
unity or coherence.

Rarely

Serious errors in organization
make writing difficult to follow.

Grandfather's Boat

When I when't to the bot I when't of the weekend. It is my grandfather's and grandmother's bot. I came home monday Aug. 30, 1993. My grafatherdrove the bot. I when't with my sister Jessica, my gradmother and grandfather. The bot is in alake. We were in New York. We were in port henre. When we got there we when't swimming. I when't nightswimming with gramna and papa. And of cors my sister Jessica. We were in the water most of the time. The bot staytes at mereno bowey 39. I alsow woks every night before we when't to bed. We when't to the store and got hot fog sundays. We alsow so a paper mill it is a huge gray bilding. That is what the paper mill locks like. At night the paper mill is all lite up. It lock's much prettyer when it is all lite up? There is alot of smoke that comes out of the paper mill. The paper mill is somthing that makes paper. That is where all the paper comes from. The paper mill really smells bad. We drove to the Mereno. The bot was all ready there. Then we put are logige in and my grafather drove the bot to port henry. On sunday we got hot fug sondays. We walk up to the ice cream store. The ice cream store was near Kmart. I really like my Grandparents. They are my Mom's parints. We were in lake Shampe Plain. First we were in Vermont then on the bot we crost under the New York brige. Then we went to port henery. My grandparints own the bot. The bot is really big. It is red, white and blue. You can sleep on the bot. We whent on school vecashin. My Mom and Dad had to work.

THE END ?

4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

Grandfather's Boat

O- Serious errors in organization make it very difficult to follow. Reader needs more information to have piece move forward — to follow the writer's ideas. This is a clear example of *serious errors in organization*.

D- Details are present, but lack elaboration and don't contribute to the development of ideas, information. Some repetition.

Grandfather's Boat					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently					
Sometimes	✓		✓	✓	
Rarely		Serious errors in organization make writing difficult to follow			✓

Sugar

Sugar is used to sprinkle on food to make it sweet. All the foods that have sugar in it is called carbohydrates. The sugar is little white crystals. If you eat too much you will get hyper and energy. This report will help me learn more about sugar. If you eat too much sugar with out brushing your teeth they will rot.

Sugar

P- Writer's purpose involves reporting about sugar, but focus is not clear — effects? benefits? description?

O- Each sentence relates to the topic but sequencing is weak. Sentences shift back and forth between facts about sugar and effects of sugar.

G/U/M- Relative to length, there are some errors here (commas, subject/verb agreement), but not distracting.

Sugar					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently					✓
Sometimes	✓	Lapse(s) in organization affect unity or coherence	✓	✓	
Rarely					

The Most Money I've Ever Found

I was walking to my house and I saw something in the road. I went over to see what it was. It appeared to be a one hundred dollar bill in the street. I picked it up and I ran home and I told my mom. She ran down the stairs. She almost fell. Then she said, "Are you kidding?" "No!" I said, "I'm not kidding." Then my sister came down the stairs in wonder and she said, "What is all the commotion about?" My mom said "James found a one hundred dollar bill in the street." "No way!" "Yes way!" I said, "we are returning it to the police," said mom. "No way!" "Yes way!" I said, "well easy come easy go." We took it to the police station. The end

4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

Most Money

O- Easily followed, but there are a few lapses. Dialogue sometimes confusing and not well connected to what precedes/follows it.

D- Details help to clarify, and do develop the ideas of the piece. Details might be called unelaborated in this piece, but they seem to work well because they fit with the somewhat breathless tone.

V/T- Personal expression; good choice of nouns, descriptive verbs as well as realistic dialogue.

G/U/M- Paragraphing missing, comma errors — but they do not distract the reader.

Most Money					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently	✓	Writing moves forward with few lapses in unity or coherence	✓	✓	✓
Sometimes					
Rarely					

Elf has a Problem
It was Christmas Eve. My family was all wound up. I was putting the cookies out for Santa. When my mom called from up stairs, "Get ready for bed dear." I layed the cookies on the coffee table and got ready for bed. I layed in my bed so excited to go to sleep, so I went down stairs to get a drink, when I heard a thump. I tiptoeed into the living room ready to hit a robber, and I saw Mr. Elf. He was saying to him self, "Oh dear oh dear how in the world did Santa do this?"

Then he started reading my families Christmas list and pulling the presents out of his bag that we had asked for. Then the elf layed them down under the stockings. He looked up the chimney and said, "Get up," after nothing happened he added, "Now how am I going to go up?"

"Maybe I could Elf," I said stepping out so he could see me.

"Oh no Santa said don't suppose to let anybody see me," he said sitting down with a frown on her face.

"Where's Santa?" I asked in wonder.

"He's sick," he said still frowning.

"Well mabe we could get a ladder and stick it up the chimney and you could climb up," I said.

"Well make to much noise," he said. "But wait we could get that chair, put it in the fire place, put some books on it, and you could stand on it and lift me up." he said changing the frown to a smile.

"Y E S," I screamed.

"Dear who are you talking to?" my mom asked from ~~up~~ stairs just waking "up."

"Um the cat," I answered.

"Oh," my mom said yawning.

The elf was looking up the chimney when he sneezed.

"I'm coming down there dear you sound as if you have a cold, and you don't want to be sick for Christmas," my mom said.

My mom came down and felt my fore head.

"You seem all right," she said
 "It was that elf that sneezed,"
 I said pointing toward the fire place
 noticing he was gone. "He was," I said
 looking up the chimney.

Go to bed dear you have a big
 day tomorrow," my mom said looking at
 me in a weird way.

That morning after all the presents
 were opened I found a note in the fire
 place it said: Thanks, by the way my
 name is Scott.

I was about to show my
 family the note, but then everybody
 would laugh at me. So I put it
 in my pocket and gave a secretive
 smile.

Elf

O- Complex story. Dialogue is fluent and connected well - supports the focus of the story.

G/U/M- Errors that are present are incidental in view of the complexity of this piece.

Elf					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively	✓	Organized from beginning to end, logical progression of ideas, fluent and cohesive	✓	✓	✓
Frequently					
Sometimes					
Rarely					

Details	
In assessing, consider...	<p>...whether details develop ideas or information</p> <p>...whether details elaborate or clarify the content of the writing with images, careful explanation, effective dialogue, parenthetical expressions, stage directions, etc.</p>
Ask how consistently, relative to length and complexity...	<p>details contribute to development of ideas and information, evoke images or otherwise elaborate or clarify the content of the writing</p>
Extensively	Details are pertinent, vivid or explicit and provide ideas/information in depth.
Frequently	Details develop ideas/information; <i>or</i> details are elaborated.
<div style="text-align: center;"> <div>Yes</div> <div>Do details enhance and/or clarify the writing?</div> <div>No</div> </div>	
Sometimes	Details lack elaboration, merely listed or unnecessarily repetitious.
Rarely	Details are minimal, inappropriate, or random.

Reading

Reading is important to me. I could not work on papers or follow directions.

If I could not read books, I would not have fun. I wish I wish I could read better. I should practice more.

I like reading cause you can use your imagination.

Reading

P- Focus not clear

O- Sentences not clearly related to each other, but writing can be followed.

D- Details are random — they do not really support each other.

G/U/M- Some errors (relative to length and complexity) — spelling.

Reading					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently					✓
Sometimes	✓	✓		✓	
Rarely			Details are minimal, inappropriate, or random		

We Became Friends

we became friends when he
 lived next door to us. He has
 A lot of Base Ball cards and
 Comics. We like to play Basketball
 together and Nintendo together. He
 has a sister and one Brother
 his moms Name is Lane His Dads
 Name is Dan. He has another Dad
 that lives in Florida, his Name
 is Herd. We went to the Rutland
 fair together. We play Soccer
 together

We Became Friends

P- Topic is there, but lacks focus

D- Details are present, but they are simply listed and do not enhance or clarify the writing.

V/T- Personal expression/approp. tone not evident in this piece which is describing a friend.

G/U/M- Numerous errors (spelling, word usage, lack of caps, over-used caps) distract the reader.

We Became Friends					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently					
Sometimes	✓	✓	Details lack elaboration, merely listed or unnecessarily repetitious		✓
Rarely				✓	

I
feel
the coldness
of the wind.
The birds call
back and forth to
one another. The
squirrels are jumping
back and forth from
branch to branch. The
old trees are squeaking
in the distance. I can see
little
patches
of sky
through
the tops
of the
trees up
above me.

Wilderness (shape poem)

P- Purpose is established (shape poem), but focus is not maintained throughout (relative to length and complexity). Title is misleading.

O- Images are clearly related to each other.

D- Details are effective and create a picture within the reader's mind — but not vivid.

Wilderness					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively		✓			✓
Frequently	✓		Details develop ideas/information; or details are elaborated	✓	
Sometimes					
Rarely					

Macaroni and Cheese

When I was about 5 or 6 my dad made some macaroni and cheese. Well, it didn't turn out like macaroni and cheese. It turned out like rubber. At first Dad tried to cut it. That didn't work. Finally he got it cut and served. After I cut my piece I tried to pry it off my plate. Wiiiiinnnggg! It went flying backwards and hit my dog Taco on the head. Then my mom tried but it was glued to her plate. So was my dad's. Then last but not least Jared (my brother) tried. Wiiiiinnng! Splat! It stuck to the ceiling. Then all of a sudden, plopl. It fell onto the table. After we cleaned up and gave Taco a bath mom told dad what kind of cheese to use. Ever since then dad has never cooked macaroni and cheese again.

Macaroni and Cheese

D- Details are vivid and pertinent. They create a real picture for the reader, and enhance the tone.

GUM- A few errors (wen't, missing commas, all one paragraph?) but overall strong command of conventions.

Macaroni and Cheese					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	GUM
Extensively	✓	✓	Details are pertinent, vivid or explicit and provide ideas/ information in depth	✓	✓
Frequently					
Sometimes					
Rarely					

Voice or Tone

In assessing, consider... ...whether the writing displays a natural style, appropriate to the narrator
...*or* whether the tone of the writing is appropriate to its content

Ask how consistently, relative to length and complexity... an appropriate voice or tone is established and maintained

Extensively Distinctive personal expression or distinctive tone enhances the writing.

Frequently Establishes personal expression or effective tone.

Yes

*Can you hear the writer?
Or, is the tone effective?*

No

Sometimes Attempts personal expression or appropriate tone.

Rarely Personal expression or appropriate tone not evident.

Riboflavin

Riboflavin is a Vitamin B₂ and Vitamin 6. Riboflavin is mixed with eggs, fish liver, milk, poultry, yeast and that's it. Riboflavin helps your eyes and skin and growth. Riboflavin is a Vitamin to help you.

Riboflavin

P- Topic is evident, but focus is not clear — uses of riboflavin? where it's found?

V/T- Flat tone; no evidence of appropriate (informative, explanatory) tone for the purpose of this piece.

Riboflavin					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	GU/M
Extensively					
Frequently		✓			✓
Sometimes	✓		✓		
Rarely				Personal expression or appropriate tone not evident	

Rythum .. and shoes
 I like the part of the pirate dance when they cloggd
 and the part when the girl tapped danced.
 I like the girl who sang the dumb dog song.
 The boys - dance too. plus I liked the girl
 who did a back flip. It takes a lot of
 practice to dance like that. we went to
 New Hampshire to see Rythum, and shoes.
 I wish I could dance like that. There where
 a lot of people there. I like the hand
 done. I clap like that way too. It was
 nice to go and I liked it.

Rythum and shoes

V/T- Attempt at approp. tone (response to a performance) ("It takes a lot of practice to dance like that...") but not effectively used for most of the piece.

G/U/M- Errors (spelling, sentence fragment, missing capitals, no indentation) distract.

Rythum and Shoes					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently	✓				
Sometimes		✓	✓	Attempts personal expression or appropriate tone	✓
Rarely					

The Great Closet Cleanout

One morning while I was eating breakfast my mom told me it was time I cleaned out my closet. I said, "But it's such a nice day out don't you think I should get some fresh air?" She didn't answer for a minute but then said, "Well the answer you got to it, the answer you can go outside and play. My dad was at the table and said, 'Listen to your mother or you can clean the whole house'." So I finished eating breakfast and went to my room to clean out the closet.

It had been such a long time since I cleaned my closet I had forgotten what was even in there. While I was cleaning I noticed a large box. The box was a beautiful box that had skiers on it. I took the box out of the closet and put it on my bed. I opened up the beautiful box and saw a beautiful trophy. The trophy had a skier on it. My sister had won it skiing. She had come in first so it was a gold medal. I remembered she gave it to me for a present. So I put it on my dresser so when ever anybody walked in they could see it.

All of a sudden my mom walked in and said, "It is a beautiful day out you go outside and I'll clean your closet for you." I said, "That's OK." not telling her why. But it was because I wanted to see what else I had in my wonderful closet.

The End

The Great Closet Discovery

P- Excellent follow-through in piece; clear focus

D- Elaborated details — but depth isn't there. Some over-use of "beautiful".

V/T- Good use of conversation. You can hear the writer, but not distinctive.

G/U/M- Very few errors (some spelling and punctuation) relative to length and complexity.

The Great Closet Discovery					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively	✓	✓			✓
Frequently			✓	Establishes personal expression or appropriate tone	
Sometimes					
Rarely					

The Box

One night there was a full moon out and my mother just sent me to the old barn to get milk. On my way I heard dog's barking and howling just, it was scary so I so I said to my self, "I not scared I'm a big boy and I can handle this," so I went into the old barn and I heard the tall grass rubbing on the side of the barn. The barn had dusty corners with spider webs in the cracks in the wall's. It was creepy but I knew that it was only my imagination. So I went over to the closet where the bucket was and that was the bucket that we put milk in. But when I opened the closet there was good size box. I was scared

I didn't now what was in it so I said, "what am I a chicken," so I opened the box and there was a bunch of new kittens that are barn cat kids. I was so dumb to be scared of kittens. So I milked the cow and I carried the box of kittens home and we gave them some nice warm milk for them to drink.

The Box

O- Logical, fluent, coherent. Organization is a real strength of this paper. And, dialogue is "transitioned in" well.

D- Details are vivid and evoke images. Writer develops them in depth.

V/T- Spooky tone for purpose. Writer effectively builds mystery. Conversation with self enhances story.

GUM- Errors in spelling, punctuation and word omissions are distracting in this otherwise engaging story.

The Box					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	GUM
Extensively	✓	✓	✓	Distinctive personal expression or distinctive tone enhances the writing	
Frequently					
Sometimes					✓
Rarely					

Grammar/ Usage/ Mechanics

**In assessing,
consider...**

...the conventions of writing,
including:

- Grammar (e.g. sentence structure, syntax)
- Usage (e.g. agreement and word choice)
- Mechanics (e.g. spelling, capitalization, punctuation)

**Ask how
consistently,
relative to length
and complexity...**

As appropriate to grade level,
command of conventions is
evident, through correct English or
intentional, effective departure
from conventions

Extensively

Few or no errors present; *or*
departures from convention
appear intentional and are
effective.

Frequently

Some errors or patterns of errors
are present.

Yes

*Does writing show
grade-appropriate
command of G/U/M?*

No

Sometimes

Numerous errors are apparent
and may distract the reader.

Rarely

Errors interfere with
understanding.

Oldest Brother

My oldest brother invited me over for two weeks. The second day nothing was going on it was a bore I asked my brother if there was anything to do. He said we could play miniature golf or we could go out and play football. I said no I want to go in the attic. He said ok. I went up. It was really dark and spooky and then thump down what did that trip on? Are you ok. yes just choking and there right before me as my eyes peled I say a magic word. I brought it down stairs and ask my brother why was it up there? There was a magician lived here before I did. But he is dead now. That's a shame. Do you know where we could give it to? And he said yes I think I will we could give it to a magician. show were but saw! we did and we got ten dollars each. On when I got back to my real home I told my mom about everything and she said did you have a good time? Definitely Mom.

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40

4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

Oldest Brother

P- Attempts to establish the purpose of telling about a discovery

O- Most of the thinking can be followed, but the leap to the cause is definite problem, and affects unity and coherence. Not strong on transition

D- Mostly generic details (dark, spooky) — not elaborated

V/T- The conversation between the two boys is an attempt at voice. The ending, however, seems perfunctory, so it weakens the effect. Lack of strength negatively affects tone

G/U/M- Errors in spelling, punctuation, lack of quotation marks interfere with understanding (More than just distracting).

Oldest Brother					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently					
Sometimes	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rarely					Errors interfere with understanding

Mr. Botts

Dear Mr. Botts

Bill, I'm desusted with how you have been acting lately. Did you know that Leigh is very mad about how you lost Bandit. So now that you lost Bandit. Leigh is very very sad. I don't think Leigh is going to for give you for that. Why don't you ever take Leigh to out for pizza.? You only tack Leigh out to the laundry mat and the library. Oh, and why don't you ever call him our wright to him. I hope you find Bandit because Leigh would be much happyer. I hope you'r satisfied with what you have done. well I gess thats all I have to say for know.

Sencerely

Mr. Botts

P- Purpose of letter (to a book character) is established but not fully clear. Additional information would help the focus of the letter.

O- Not easily followed. Relationship between sentences not linked well — this affects coherence

D- Details lack elaboration

V/T- Reader can hear the writer — but not distinctive voice or tone.

G/U/M- Spelling errors, sentence fragments, lack of capitalization, etc. distract the reader, but don't interfere with understanding.

Mr. Botts					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					
Frequently	✓			✓	
Sometimes		✓	✓		Numerous errors are apparent and distract the reader
Rarely					

Rhythm and Shoes

My opinion of Rhythm and Shoes is good. I might recommend this to somebody. I wouldn't mind going again. I liked the bus ride. Rhythm and Shoes are good dances. They did three different dances. They were clogging, tap dancing and leather sole shoe dancing. There were twelve people in the group. My favorite was cliff.

Rhythm and Shoes

P- Purpose and focus are established (reaction to performance — giving opinion) but not clearly.

O- Sentences not well related to each other — affects unity and coherence.

D- Not elaborated

VT- Attempt at appropriate tone — just barely ... ("I might recommend this to somebody")

GUM- Some errors in spelling (rhythm, recommend) and a missing period at the end of a sentence. Relative to length and complexity- F. Again, beware of possible handwriting bias.

Rhythm and Shoes					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	GUM
Extensively					Some errors or patterns of errors are present
Frequently	✓				
Sometimes		✓	✓	✓	
Rarely					

THE GAME OF CLUE

One afternoon when I was about five years about old I was starting to play a game of Clue with my brother, Jeremy, my sister, Paige, and my dad, Jim.

I rolled the dice. Dad rolled a six (these are just guesses), my sister rolled a two, my brother rolled a one, and I rolled a six.

Dad and I had to roll again so we did. Dad rolled a five and I rolled a four.

We were sitting in this arrangement: Dad was on one side. To his left sat Jeremy. Next to him sat me and next to me sat Paige.

Since Dad got the highest number, he got to go first. Dad thought it should go clockwise since that was the easiest way for it to go.

I was so young then I thought it was rightfully my turn to go next since I got the second highest number.

Now we were in the wrong order.

I said, "I WANT TO GO SECOND!!!" Then everybody said, "Okay," but I was fuming mad. I picked up the Clueboard and threw it on the floor! Then I ran upstairs and screamed my head off and cried.

Dad came up and tried to calm me down.

After that I came downstairs and played a regular game of Clue with Dad, Jeremy, and Paige.

After my rage I felt ashamed.

4th Grade Writing Benchmark Pieces

Rage of Clue

P- Purpose established; focus is sometimes confusing.

O- Writing moves forward with few lapses. Some clearer transitions would help this very promising piece.

D- Details are elaborated, not yet vivid or in depth.

V/T- Effective personal expression and nice style developing; one can hear the writer. Not yet distinctive.

G/U/M- Very few errors; strong command of conventions.

Rage of Clue					
	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	G/U/M
Extensively					Few or no errors are present, or departures from convention appear intentional and are effective.
Frequently	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sometimes					
Rarely					