

Understanding Provincial Achievement Standards in Reading and Writing

Helping your child to be successful



Recognize the signs of a successful writer.

Teachers look at six areas of a student's writing to identify success, as reflected in the Provincial Achievement Standards for the end of Grade 9. The memoir on this page, about one teen's first day of high school, is an example of acceptable writing by a student at the end of Grade 9.

Content is the overall topic, degree of focus and related details. In the memoir example, the writer has presented thoughtful ideas relevant to the topic ("Breathing deeply, I finish my bowl of..."), included relevant details that enhance the ideas and maintained focus ("Thousands of people...").

Organization means the writing has a clearly established purpose in the engaging introduction, includes transitions to show sequencing and connections ("As I walk out the door..."), and finishes with a definite conclusion ("So I sit here...at this wonderful high school").

Word choice means that interesting words and/or technical or subject-specific language ("I glare into my friend Abby's eyes and see the...") and figurative language ("Memories surround me") are used to enhance meaning.

Voice means that the student has skilfully connected the audience to the topic ("The year seemed to go by faster than any other year.") and has generated strong feeling, energy and individuality ("I agreed, knowing that I would be on the ATV news in the evening.").

Sentence structure means different kinds of sentences with a variety of complex structures are used (e.g., "Where have I seen this face before? I wondered.") The sentence "Could this day be any different?" helps give the piece rhythmic flow.

Conventions means spelling, punctuation and grammar. In the memoir example, the student uses internal punctuation (e.g., semi-colon, apostrophe, comma) that creates fluency in the writing. Almost all words are used and spelled correctly.

You can support your teen's development of writing strategies and behaviours.

- Provide your teen many opportunities to read different genres of interest (e.g., science fiction, biographies) written by different authors.
- Suggest a variety of sources in which ideas and information can be gathered.
- Encourage your teen to review the Writing Revision Checklist on the attached bookmark.
- If a part of your teen's writing is confusing, point out the specific part and explain why it confused you.
- Encourage the use of a variety of publishing formats (e.g., online blogging, pamphlets).



"Breathing deeply,"

Breathing deeply, I finish my bowl of cereal not knowing what the day will bring. My first day of high school is sure to be one I will remember for the rest of my life. Memories surround me; my first day of elementary, and middle school, such wonderful times. Could this day be any different? Thousands of people would be crowded in the halls, staring at new faces & my face.

As I walk out the door, the bright yellow bus that I have taken for years and that is so familiar, I remember the great times I had. As the bus begins to pull into the massive school, I can feel my palms become sweaty. My heart begins beating faster and faster. The bus comes to a halt and I can see the fear in everyone's eyes. I glare into my friend Abby's eyes and see the same worries that haunt me too. Step after step down the steep steps I go. As I make my way of the bus the sun hits the top of my head which gives me a more relaxed attitude. Outside, a nice, cool, breezy fall morning.

Looking straight ahead, I notice something surprising. A red carpet, but for what? Confusion and excitement seem to strike me all at once. Many older students were rushing over to greet us. With smiles on their faces they escorted us down the red carpet. When walking, I was stopped by a familiar face. "Where have I seen this face before?" I wondered. When introducing herself I then discovered that she was off the ATV news. She asked my if she could tape me walking down the red carpet. I agreed, knowing that I would be on the ATV news in the evening. Walking down the red carpet gave me an overwhelming amount of confidence and I started thinking that I might actually like this school.

Days then weeks went by; homework, assignment, tests kept me extremely busy. The year seemed to go by faster than any other year. So as I sit here in my class wondering where the time went I am reminded of my first day at this wonderful high school.

Writing Revision Checklist

Content

- I selected a topic with a main idea.
- I included relevant ideas or events.
- I supported my ideas with details.

Organization

- I used my introduction to let my readers know what I would be writing about.
- I put my ideas into a logical order and organized them into paragraphs.
- I used transitions between and within paragraphs to connect my ideas.
- I provided an appropriate conclusion.

Word Choice

- I included interesting words and specific language (strong nouns and verbs, colourful adjectives and adverbs).
- I used figurative language (e.g., metaphor, analogy, symbolism) where appropriate.

Voice

- I made my reader interested in my topic.
- I showed that I care about my topic.
- I created strong feeling, energy and individuality.

Sentence Structure

- I used a variety of sentence structures.
- I used a variety of sentence lengths and beginnings to make my writing flow.

Conventions

- I included internal punctuation (commas, semi-colons, colons, hyphens, parentheses and apostrophes) and I correctly paragraphed any dialogue.
- I used correct spelling.
- I used correct grammar (e.g., plurals, subject/verb agreement, verb tense, all parts of speech, numbers, contractions).

Tear off these handy checklists for your teen. He or she will recognize the traits of good writing and the reading strategies from school. They will support strong independent reading and writing skill development.



Reading Strategies Checklist

I can use the following strategies and thinking to help me understand what I am reading:

- Connecting – This reminds me of the character _____ in _____.
- Questioning – I am confused because the chart (or another text feature) seems to say something different from the text.
- Inferring – I think _____ because it says _____.
- Visualizing – The author describes _____ in a way that I can clearly see.
- Determining Importance – Although I find this information interesting, it is not part of the main idea.
- Analyzing – I think the author’s purpose in writing this was to _____.
- Synthesizing: “This information has made me reconsider how I viewed _____.”

Fix-Up Strategies Checklist

I can use the following strategies to help me when the text becomes confusing:

- Stop and think about what I have already read.
- Use writing to reflect about what I have read.
- Retell what I have read.
- Reread.
- Notice patterns in text structure.
- Adjust my reading rate: slow down or speed up.

Recognize the signs of a successful reader.

In Grade 9, your teen will read a variety of literary and information-based texts written by many different authors. You, your teen and his or her teacher can tell whether your teen is reading successfully by watching for growth in the following **reading behaviours**, drawn from the Provincial Achievement Standards for the **end of Grade 9**.

Checking closely for understanding and adjusting and using a wide range of strategies

Encourage your teen to analyze, synthesize and evaluate what she or he reads and organize significant information in notes or with graphic organizers.

Quickly solving unfamiliar words using a variety of clues

Encourage your teen to use root words or origins to find the meanings of unknown or technical words.

Automatically reading and understanding more words in a range of contexts

Encourage your teen to read and remember important vocabulary from grade-level texts and spoken language.

Reading familiar texts with expression and confidence, and adjusting rates to match form and purpose

Encourage your teen to use appropriate phrasing, pausing and tone. Keep in mind that most reading at this level is silent.

Using context clues, prior knowledge or experience, and knowledge of text forms and features

Encourage your teen to verify and adjust predictions while reading, and to seek information from other sources when necessary.

Using text features (e.g., glossary, captions, charts and diagrams) to interpret and locate information

Encourage your teen to use all of the information in a text—not just the words in the paragraphs—to preview, interpret and locate information.

Reflecting on reading processes and strategies to ensure deeper understanding of content

Encourage your teen to use the reading and fix-up strategies checklists on the attached bookmark.

Your teen reads text that contains few or no illustrations with many lines of print on a page, as in the literary text example, *The Story of an Hour*. Illustrations, photographs and complex graphics that add meaning and require interpretation are also expected at this level.

Teens now read texts that are mature and contain challenging themes and ideas. Topics may include moral issues, such as abuse, war, hardship, poverty, class barriers, racism, sexuality, murder and addiction. Your teen will often need to interpret and connect information and ideas to other texts and subject areas. The literary text, *The Story of an Hour*, is an example of a text that a Grade 9 student can read and understand.

The language in reading material for your teen is challenging:

- many long, multi-syllable words (e.g., abandonment, tumultuously)
- complex plurals and spelling patterns (e.g., afflicted, aquiver)
- many nouns and technical words that are difficult to decode (e.g., exhaustion, tumultuously)

Did you know?

In Grade 9, your teen will complete the English Language Proficiency Assessment (E.L.P.A.), which measures reading comprehension and writing skills. Successful completion of the E.L.P.A. is a graduation requirement for a New Brunswick high school diploma.

Studies show that students who read longer each day perform higher on reading tests. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1998) report on this strong correlation:

Minutes of Reading per Day	Percentile Rank
90.7	98
40.4	90
21.7	70
12.9	50
3.1	20
1.6	10

THE STORY OF AN HOUR

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed". He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the colour that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will – as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

Kate Chopin

You can support your teen's development of reading skills.

Teens demonstrating appropriate achievement respond to three levels of comprehension tasks. Interpreting and evaluating what is read are necessary elements of reading at this level. The table offers sample questions you can ask to help support your teen's comprehension:

Comprehension Task	Reading "the lines"	Reading "between the lines"	Reading "beyond the lines"
Questions you can ask:	What were the key ideas in the information you read? Why is the _____ event or action important in the story?	In what ways did the weaknesses or strengths of the character affect the chain of events in the story? What is the theme or message of the selection?	How would you have solved the problem? Whose viewpoint is presented or missing? Whose interests are served?

Contact Us

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to your child's reading and writing success. If you have any questions about your child's progress or about how you can be an active part of his or her learning, contact your child's teacher or the provincial literacy team at 506-453-2812.