

WRITING PORTFOLIO GUIDE: Kindergarten Opinion Writing



Connecticut State Department of Education

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WRITING PORTFOLIO GUIDE: Kindergarten Opinion Writing

To develop and promote effective writing assessment resources that align to the Connecticut Core Standards, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) developed training materials to support classroom teachers' instruction of writing throughout the year. This particular kindergarten guide includes a grade-appropriate text and an evidence-based writing prompt that was administered to over 100 kindergarten students representing a range of writing abilities from across Connecticut. The CSDE collected and scored their responses with guidance from the Writing Assessment Advisory Committee.

These materials can be used for classroom-, building-, or district-level training to support evidence-based student writing.

Background

During the fall and early winter of 2016, English Language Arts (ELA) consultants from the CSDE visited over a dozen kindergarten classrooms in Connecticut in which the text, *I Like Myself*, written by Karen Beaumont, was read aloud to students. Following the reading, the class was asked to write briefly about what made them special. They were encouraged to support their opinion with an illustration. This process took approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Student responses were scored across three writing dimensions (Organization/Purpose, Evidence/Elaboration, and Conventions) using Connecticut-developed scoring rubrics aligned to the Smarter Balanced ELA Performance Task Writing Rubrics and the Connecticut Core Standards for Kindergarten.

The collection represents a range in both depth and abilities. Examining student responses across the three dimensions for writing provides teachers with a closer look at individual and group strengths and weaknesses in writing. In particular, this writing prompt calls for students to use evidence-based examples in their written response. By looking more closely at the three scoring dimensions, teachers can provide students with specific tools and instruction needed to meet the grade-level expectations set in the standards.

The scoring rubrics were meant to be general and can be used with a variety of writing assignments across content areas and purposes. They can be used in part to focus on one particular dimension, such as using Evidence/Elaboration, or in their entirety to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing.

Student Exemplars

The exemplar set for kindergarten opinion writing contains a stimulus, an item stem, scoring rubrics, a Smarter Balanced Performance Task Conventions Scoring Chart, writing anchor papers, and a student friendly rubric.

Directions for using this ELA/Literacy guide:

1. Start by reading the stimulus and the accompanying item stem.
2. Examine the specific rubrics for each dimension and score point.
3. Read through the condition code document to better understand how to score unusual responses.
4. Read the student's response each time a new rubric is used.

Writing Portfolio Guide Glossary

Source: informational or research-based texts from various academic disciplines for students to use as evidence or support in their writing.

Item Stem/Your assignment: a paragraph prompting the student to create a focused written response.

Anchor papers: examples of student responses and scoring comments ordered from high to low by score point. In this set of anchor papers, each student response received three annotated scores: a score for Organization/Purpose, a score for Evidence/Elaboration, and a score for Conventions.

Scoring Rubrics: a description of the item expectations that includes a description of response characteristics typically exhibited at each score-point to ensure consistent scoring.

Scores with Plus or Minus

Within a score point there are varying levels, from the low end of the point indicated by a minus sign, to the very high end of a score point, indicated by a plus sign. This allows us to differentiate when hand scoring between those students who are either barely within a score point and those that are close to the next score point. This additional information is beneficial when learning to score a paper and when determining next steps in instruction based on students' strengths and weaknesses.

Kindergarten Opinion Writing

Source: Beaumont, K. (2004). *I Like Myself*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Inc., New York, NY.

Item Stem/Your assignment: Each of us is a special person. Think about yourself; how you look, how you act, or what you like about yourself. Write about yourself using the words that best tell about what makes you special. When you have finished writing about what makes you special, draw a picture of yourself.

Kindergarten Opinion Writing Scoring Rubrics

| Kindergarten Opinion Writing Rubric: ORGANIZATION/PURPOSE | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Score | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Organization/Purpose | <p>Using mostly writing, with some drawing or dictating, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly states an opinion or preference about the topic • uses structure that matches the purpose | <p>Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequately states an opinion or preference about the topic • incorporates a structure | <p>Using mostly drawing or dictating with minimal writing, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • states an opinion or preference that is somewhat unclear • begins to show emerging structure | <p>Using drawing, with no dictating or writing, the response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lacks an opinion or preference • uses a random or unclear structure |

January 20, 2017

| Kindergarten Opinion Writing Rubric: EVIDENCE/ELABORATION | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Score | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Evidence/Elaboration | <p>Using mostly writing, with some drawing or dictating, the response provides effective elaboration of the support/evidence for the opinion. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supplies effective details and a reason to support the opinion effectively uses vocabulary/language appropriate to the task | <p>Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing, the response provides adequate elaboration of the support/evidence for the opinion. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supplies relevant details to support the opinion adequately uses vocabulary/language appropriate to the task | <p>Using mostly drawing or dictating with minimal writing, the response provides little elaboration of the support/evidence for the opinion. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supplies weak details to support the opinion uses some vocabulary/language appropriate to the task | <p>Using drawing, with no dictating or writing, the response does not provide elaboration of the support/evidence for the opinion. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supplies unrelated details or does not supply details uses vague, unclear, or confusing vocabulary/language |

January 20, 2017

| Kindergarten Opinion Writing Rubric: CONVENTIONS | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Score | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Conventions | <p>The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions. The response demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling | <p>The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions. The response demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling | <p>The response demonstrates little or no command of conventions. The response demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> infrequent use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling |

January 20, 2017

| CONVENTIONS | |
|--|--|
| <p>Holistic Scoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety: A range of errors includes sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling. Severity: Basic errors are more heavily weighted than higher-level errors. Density: The proportion of errors to the amount of writing done well. This includes the ratio of errors to the length of the piece. | |

Smarter Balanced — Conventions Chart — April 2014 Grades K–1

| Spelling | Capitalization | Punctuation | Grammar Usage | Sentence Completion |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use regular plural nouns correctly by adding /s/ or /es/ (e.g., dog, dogs; wish, wishes). Use conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and for frequently occurring irregular words. | <p>Capitalize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the first word in a sentence. the pronoun I. names of people. days of the week. months of the year. | <p>Use end punctuation for sentences.</p> <p>Use commas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in dates. to separate single words in a series. | <p>Nouns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., He hops; We hop). <p>Verbs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly use verbs to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., Yesterday I walked home; Today I walk home; Tomorrow I will walk home). <p>Pronoun:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly use common personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns (e.g., I, me, my; they, them, their; anyone, everything). <p>Determiners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly use determiners (e.g., articles, demonstratives). <p>Conjunctions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correctly use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., and, so, but, because). | N/A |

Smarter Balanced Condition Code Categories

For the purposes of scoring open-ended responses on the summative test, including Performance Tasks, Smarter Balanced applies the following Condition Code Categories to capture those responses that do not fulfill the expectation of the test item. In some cases, a student may not provide a response, while another case may include a response unrelated to the question or topic being assessed. These codes allow the handscorer to categorize the type of response and provide more information than merely scoring it a zero.

| Condition Codes | Smarter Balanced Condition Code Category Updated April 25, 2017 |
|-----------------|---|
| B | <p>Blank</p> <p>No response provided</p> |
| I | <p>Insufficient</p> <p>a. Student has not provided a meaningful response. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random keystrokes/handstrokes • Undecipherable text • <i>I hate this test</i> • <i>I don't know, IDK</i> • <i>I don't care</i> • <i>I like pizza!</i> (in response to a reading passage about helicopters) • Response consists entirely of profanity <p>b. For ELA Full Writes, use "I" code (Insufficient) for responses described above and also if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student's original work is insufficient to determine whether he or she is able to organize, cite evidence/elaborate, and use conventions as defined in the rubrics; or • response is too brief to determine whether it is on purpose or on topic. |
| L | <p>Non-Scorable Language</p> <p>ELA/literacy: Language other than English and/or Mathematics: Language other than English or Spanish</p> |
| T | <p>Off Topic <i>for ELA Full Writes Only</i></p> <p>Definition: A writing sample will be judged off topic when the response is unrelated to the task or the sources, or shows no evidence that the student has read the task or the sources (especially for informative/explanatory and opinion/argumentative).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off-topic responses are generally substantial responses. |
| M | <p>Off Purpose <i>for ELA Full Writes Only</i></p> <p>Definition: A writing sample will be judged off purpose when the student has clearly not written to the purpose designated in the task.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An off-purpose response addresses the topic of the task, but not the purpose of the task. • Note that students may use narrative techniques in an explanatory essay or use argumentative/persuasive techniques to explain, for example, and still be on purpose. • Off-purpose responses are generally developed responses (essays, poems, etc.) clearly not written to the designated purpose. |

Kindergarten Anchor Sets

| GRADE K | P-1 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 4 | 4 | 2 |



I am special
 because I like my
 books. I read
 them.



I am special because
 I like my family.

*"I am special because I like my books. I read them.
 I am special because I like my family."*

4: The student provides an opinion with a sense of structure.

4: The student provides relevant details to support the opinion (*I like to read them...I like my family*).

2: This response incorporates appropriate sentence structure and correct usage of end punctuation. The capitalization of letters and spelling vary, but based on density, this response shows an adequate control of conventions.

| GRADE K | P-2 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 4 | 4 | 1 |



I AM SPECIAL
 BECAUSE
 I GIVE KISSES
 I AM SPECIAL
 BECAUSE I AM
 ME KISS

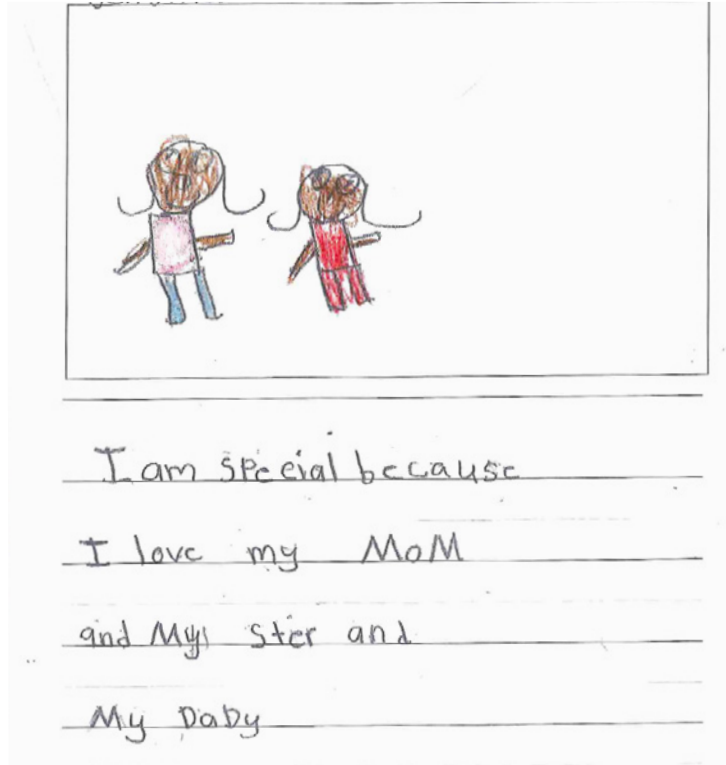
*"I am special because I give kisses.
 I am special because I am me."*

4: The student clearly states an opinion with an appropriate structure.

4: The student uses effective evidence in both writing and drawing with grade-appropriate language.

1: Reversed letters are not of major concern at this grade level. The student demonstrates partial control of conventions, while there are some missing words. There are inconsistencies with capitalization and the student does not use end punctuation.

| GRADE K | P-3 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 4 | 4 | 2 |



"I am special because I love my mom and my sister and my Daddy."

4: The student provides a clear opinion with a sense of structure.

4: The student provides three pieces of effective and relevant evidence to support the opinion.

2: This response demonstrates an understanding of sound/symbol correspondence. Although there is no end punctuation, capitals are correct and spelling is developmentally appropriate.

| GRADE K | P-4 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 4- | 3 | 2 |




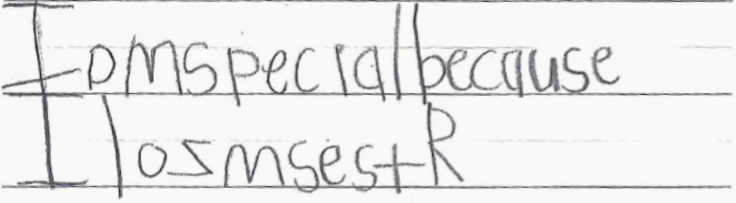
I am special
 because I can
 belins on m
 Hat!

"I am special because I can balance on my head!"

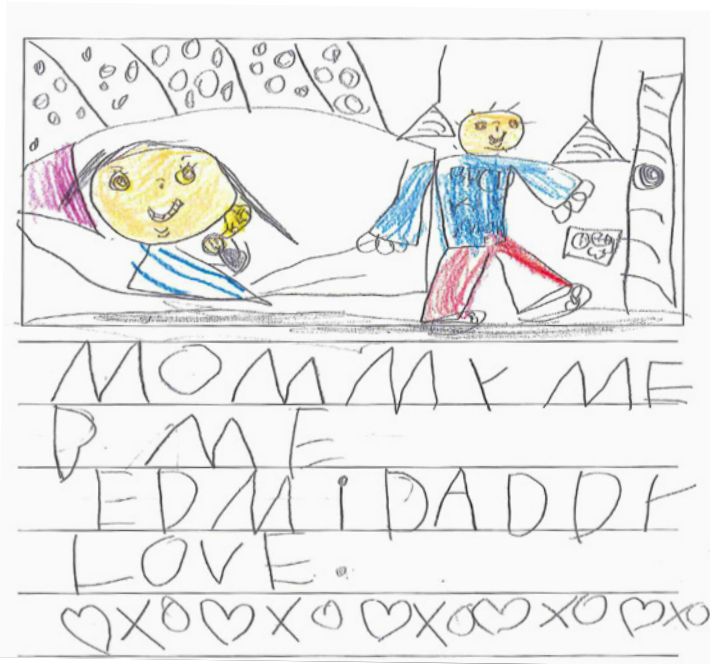
4-: The student provides an opinion.

3: The student supports the opinion both through writing and drawing (...because I can balance on my head).

2: The student demonstrates an understanding of sound/symbol relationships (*belins/balance* and *hd/head*) and correctly uses end punctuation (!).

| GRADE K | P-5 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 4- | 2 | 1- |
|  | | <p>4-: The student clearly states an opinion.</p> | | |
| | | <p>2: The student provides some support of the opinion with the drawing (<i>I love my sister</i>).</p> | | |
| | | <p>1-: This response includes random capitalization (<i>R</i>), and demonstrates limited phonetic awareness when spelling. However, there are spelling and punctuation errors throughout.</p> | | |
| | |  <p><i>"I am special because I love my sister."</i></p> | | |

| GRADE K | P-6 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 3- | 4 | 0 |



"My mommy made me and my Daddy loves me."

3-: The reader needs the dictation (provided on the back of the student paper) to clarify the student's message. There are missing words, but overall, words are understandable as written. The drawing, dictating, and writing, collectively provide an adequate opinion, which is the expectation of the standard and therefore a 3.

4: The student provides two pieces of evidence that are enhanced by the drawing.

0: The student demonstrates an understanding of sound/symbol relationships (*mi/me*) with high-frequency words (*mommy, daddy*) spelled correctly. Otherwise, the response is completely written in capital letters, and there are words missing, making it impossible to understand the written message without some dictation.

| GRADE K | P-7 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 3- | 3 | 0 |

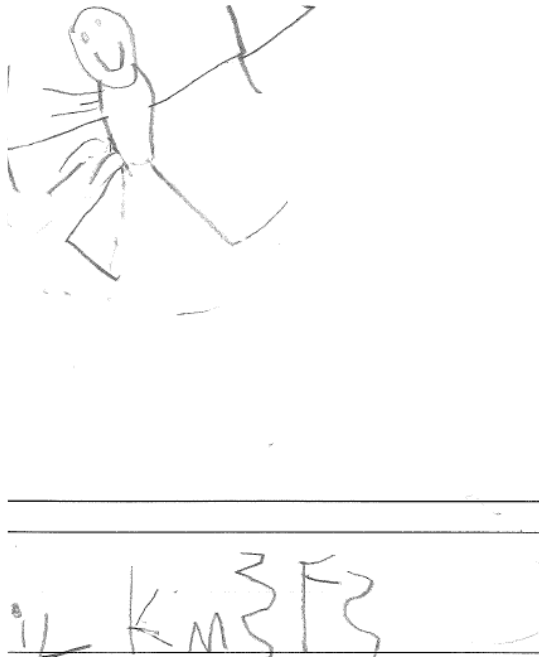


"I'm very fast."

3-: The student presents a clear opinion (*I'm very fast*) and dictated the response to make it understandable.

3: The student drawing enhances the opinion.

0: The response contains inconsistent use of capitalization and lacks punctuation.



"I like my super-fast speed."

| GRADE K | P-8 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 3- | 2 | 2- |



I m Gud to my siser

"I'm good to my sister."

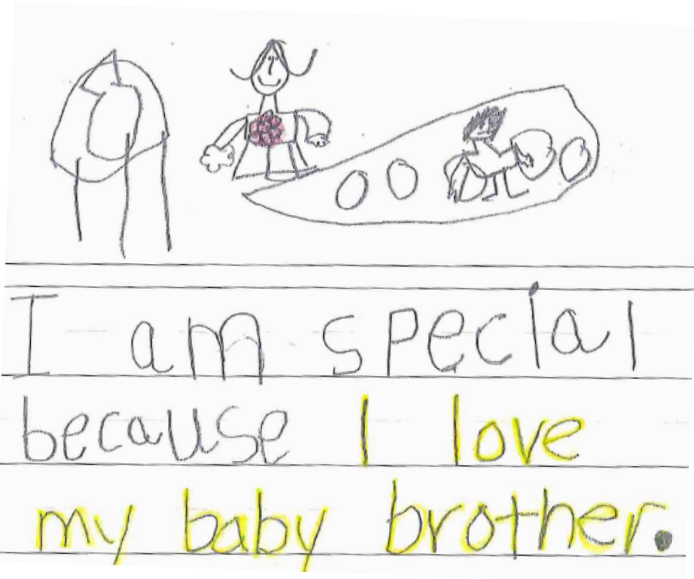
3-: The student states an opinion (*I'm good to my sister*).

2: The student's detailed drawing provides some support of the opinion.

2-: In this response, the inappropriate use of punctuation interferes with comprehension. There is inconsistent use of capitalization. However, the student demonstrates an understanding of sound/symbol relationships.

| GRADE K | P-9 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|--|-----|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 3- | 2+ | 0 |
| <p style="text-align: center;">"I am beautiful. I like nail polish at The Shoppes at Big Y."</p> | | <p>3-: The student presents a clear opinion (<i>I am beautiful</i>), and dictated the response to make it comprehensible.</p> | | |
| | | <p>2+: The elaboration is not well connected to the opinion (<i>I like nail polish at The Shoppes at Big Y</i>).</p> | | |
| | | <p>0: The student demonstrates an understanding of sound/symbol relationships (<i>bdf/beautiful</i>) and phonetic awareness. However, the response contains inconsistent capitalization and spelling.</p> | | |

| GRADE K | P-10 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 2 | 2 | 0 |



"I am special because I love my baby brother."

2: This dictated response includes an opinion, but all words were written with adult support; it receives a score point 2.

2: The student drawing supports the dictated opinion.

0: This response was dictated with some words copied by the student and others dictated to and written by the teacher. Those in yellow were traced by the student.

| GRADE K | P-11 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 2 | 2 | 0 |



I am special because
 I can balance a lollipop on my
 head. I am happy. Is happy.

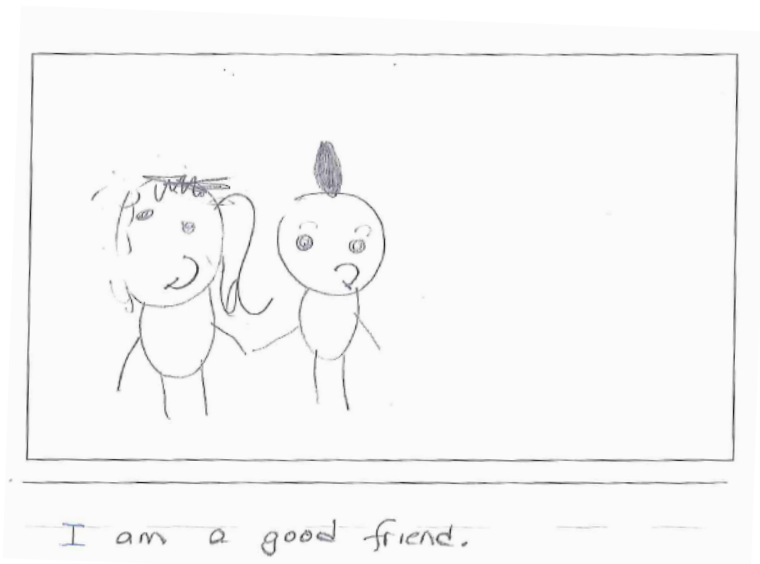
"I am special because I can balance a lollipop on my head. I got happy. Is happy."

2: The response states an opinion, but the response is loosely structured and awkward.

2: There is a mix of support and superfluous information that detracts from the meaning. The picture is unclear. (*I can balance a lollipop on my head vs. I got happy.*)

0: While the student incorporates appropriate end punctuation, this paper contains fragmented sentence structure and demonstrates limited phonetic awareness.

| GRADE K | P-12 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 2- | 1+ | 0 |



"I am a good friend."

2-: This dictated response includes an opinion (*I am a good friend*). Because all words were written with adult support, it receives a score point 2.

1+: Given that this response was dictated, all words were written with adult support. The response contains a simplistic drawing of two friends holding hands to support the opinion.

0: This response was dictated.

| GRADE K | P-13 | Organization/ Purpose (1-4 Points) | Evidence/ Elaboration (1-4 Points) | Conventions (0-2 Points) |
|---------|------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | 1 | 1 | 0 |












"I am playing ball outside with my sister."

1: While the student worked independently, she explained her written response (*I am playing ball outside with my sister*). The student does not give an opinion.

1: Based on the writing (and oral translation of the writing from the student) there is no clear written evidence, though the student's drawing is consistent with the oral translation of her writing.

0: This response shows no command of conventions.

Teachers can use or modify the optional Kindergarten Writer’s Checklist, below, to meet the appropriate writing objectives to assist classroom instruction.

| Kindergarten Writer’s Checklist | |
|--|--|
| <p>I sounded out my words.</p>  | |
| <p>I used finger spaces.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I like to run.</p>  | |
| <p>I drew a picture to match my story.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">I like to run fast.</div>  </div> | |
| <p>I started my sentences with capital letters.</p>  | |
| <p>I used ending marks.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div> | |
| <p>I wrote neatly.</p>  | |
| <p>I tried my best!</p>  | |