Annotated Student Work Set: Grade 4 Writing Prompt

Standard W.4.3 (and supporting Reading Standards: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.6, and RL.4.10)

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Analyzing Student Work for Actionable Trends in Literacy

**Purpose:** Follow an approach to efficiently analyze student work in order to understand students’ thinking and identify gaps in skills and knowledge in order to take targeted action.

**Objectives:**
- Analyze student work in order to understand students’ thinking and identify gaps in skills and knowledge
- Create a plan to take targeted action to support students’ skills and knowledge

**Materials:**
- Writing task and student work (8-10 samples from a cross-section of your class is preferable)
- Grade-level Common Core Writing and Reading Standards

**Actions:**
1. **Understand the task, the standard, and the text.** Start by stepping into students’ shoes and reading the writing prompt. Next, look at the writing standards to identify which standard(s) this task assesses. Last, read the passage to identify the qualitative features of complexity that may be challenging for students.
   1. What are students actually being asked to do in this task?
   2. Which standards are being assessed through this task?
   3. What will be challenging about this text for students? Where will they likely struggle?
2. **Set the criteria for student work.** With your team, craft an exemplar response to the writing prompt. Next, identify what you would expect to see in student work that is:
   - Meeting expectations
   - Approaching expectations
   - Far below the standard
3. **Analyze and sort student work into buckets.** Review each student work sample and sort it by these categories (i.e. Meeting expectations, Approaching expectations, and Far below the standard).
4. **Review each bucket for trends.** Identify patterns of success or need, specifically in relation to the standards this task addresses.
   - For each bucket, what does the work show about student understanding and misconceptions? Is there a trend in what’s holding them back? Consider gaps in writing skills and reading comprehension—often, students struggle with writing because they struggle to comprehend the text.
5. **Come up with a targeted plan for your students.** Review the trends you’ve identified and think through next steps.
   - Which of these things is “actionable” - something we can control and take action on?
   - What will be the most important thing to focus on to move each group forward? Name one specific next step.
   - How will you target this gap in your planning and instruction?
Read the passage about a grandmother who loves to dance, and then answer the questions that follow.

from Yia-Yia’s Dance
by Laurie Halse Anderson

1. The night she was born, everyone danced.
3. Yia-Yia was born in a tiny village in Greece. Her four brothers, her grandparents, and all the aunts, uncles, and cousins danced around a bonfire long into the night when she was born. Her mother and father had waited many years for a girl child. Their love for her was as deep as the sea. Her father took her outside to the happy relatives when she was only one hour old. She opened her eyes. She watched the firelight and smoke curl up to the stars that hung above their village.
4. Just as she was learning how to walk, the family packed up everything they owned and crossed the ocean in a ship. The sailors taught her how to dance to the music of a pipe, while seagulls sang overhead.
5. When she got bigger, she twirled and whirled on her way to school in the morning. She snapped her fingers and clicked her heels on the way home in the afternoon. There was always work to be done at her house—floors to scrub and pots to wash and clothes to iron and schoolwork to finish late into the night at the kitchen table. She held a tune in her heart and tapped out a beat with her toes, so the time passed quickly by.
6. Back then my Papou1 stood tall and strong. He fell in love with the way Yia-Yia’s black hair glowed in the candlelight of their church. He talked to each one of her four brothers and her father and then her mother to get permission to sit next to her on the stoop2 and drink lemonade. They ate sweet cakes she made with her slender hands. When he asked her to marry him he had a spot of honey on his chin.
7. At their wedding, her feet barely touched the ground. The voices of the singers and the perfume of the incense3 coiled around her heart and made her eyes wet. Wearing their wedding crowns, she and her beloved walked three times around the altar and became partners for life.
8. Later came babies—my mom, my Aunt Helena, and my Uncle Costas. Yia-Yia danced with them all so they wouldn’t fuss. She played old records and whispered stories of a faraway village. With a baby in her arms, she hummed the tunes of far away. She high-stepped her way from the kitchen to the laundry room, from the grocery to the church. She tied back her long hair with scarves of blue and green.
9. When the children grew older she taught them the right steps: chin up, back straight, eyes clear and steady. She kissed Papou on the chin when he came home in the evening, tired from the mill. She pulled him to the soft chair and served him thick coffee and figs while dinner cooked.

1 Papou - the Greek word for “grandfather”
2 stoop - front porch
3 incense - a smoky odor
10. Uncle Costas married Aunt Tessa, and Aunt Helena married Uncle Roy, and my mom married my dad. Then came the grandchildren—roly-poly grandchildren who loved pastries and cookies and a spinning grandmother who hummed.

11. These days the best place to see my Yia-Yia dance is at the church festival. The guitar music rings in my ears, and the salty-sweet tastes of Greece fill my mouth. Yia-Yia and Papou sit at the end of a long table. They watch the young people dance in graceful lines that snake in and out of the room. They smile at their friends and wave to their children and grandchildren, but Yia-Yia does not dance ... until the band plays the sailor’s song. She takes the snow-white handkerchief from Papou’s jacket pocket and slides the scarf from her hair. Everyone in the room stops to watch her.

12. She dances. Her arms glide like the wings of a swan. Her feet stomp and her legs leap, harder and higher than the youngest girl. Her proud face is strong, like the faces in the paintings in the church. The music grows louder, and her children and grandchildren cheer. She throws back her head. Her dark, silver-streaked hair comes alive like a moonless night lit by shimmering silver stars. And it curls in the air like the smoke rising from a village bonfire.

Prompt:

In Yia-Yia’s Dance, the narrator describes Yia-Yia’s life and her connection to music and dancing. Pretend that you are one of Yia-Yia’s grandchildren and write an original story. In your story, describe why you love music and how you learned to dance with your Yia-Yia.

- As the character, explain why you love music.
- As the character, explain how you learned how to dance.
- As the character, explain why dancing is important to you.

Be sure to write your response as a story, but follow Standard English grammar rules. Develop your story with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. Organize your ideas with a clear introduction, effective transitions, and a concluding thought.
Common Core Standards Assessed:

Primary Writing Standard

W.4.3 - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- W.4.3a Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- W.4.3b Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- W.4.3c Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
- W.4.3d Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- W.4.3e Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Related Reading Standards

RL.4.1 - Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.4.2 - Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

RL.4.3 - Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

RL.4.6 - Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

RL.4.10 - By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
ANet Annotations on Student Work

Please note that we’ve organized our annotations according to these three components:

1. **COMP**: Deep comprehension of the passage (not necessarily in direct response to the prompt), paying particular attention to the CCSS reading standards identified
2. **WRIT**: Accurate, thorough answer to the prompt, paying particular attention to CCSS writing standard identified
3. **EV**: Use of evidence to support analysis

Student A

…..I love Music because it is fun to listen and to jam. I also, like music because it is only something that New Orleans do. I learned how to dance. Off of a dance show that I watch and what it is called “Bring it.” also, My aunt taught me how to dance because I told her when I grow up I want to be a dance teacher so that I am able to teach MY girls what they need to learn so that the girls can become a better dancer than they already were. Dancing is important to me because it something that I want to do for the rest of my life and career. also, it is important that I teach my girls what they need to learn and what their suppose to learn. also, remember what do you want in your life.

- No attempt to refer to details and examples in the text (RL 4.1) - COMP
- No attempt to determine the theme of the story (RL 4.2) – COMP
- No attempt to describe in depth a character, setting, or event (RL 4.3) – COMP
- No attempt to establish the scenario of pretending to be one of Yia-Yia’s grandchildren - WRIT

**SUMMARY**

**COMP – Below**
Student has not demonstrated comprehension of the text. Student did not make references to relevant evidence in the text or use evidence from the text to serve as a foundation for an original story.

**WRIT – Below**
Student demonstrated some attempt to address the prompt. Student used concrete words, “love music,” “learned to dance,” and “dancing is important,” to convey experiences and adhere to the prompt but was inconsistent in explaining the greater purpose. Student failed to identify the narrator/character as Yia-Yia’s grandchild. Student also attempted to use transitions to organize the response; however, the inconsistent use of transitions resulted in the response being somewhat unorganized. Student accurately described a character (aunt) and an event to develop an experience in the story that nicely discusses both how the student learned to dance and why dancing is and will continue to be important. There is no reference to the characters or details in the passage. Student may have answered the prompt from personal experience rather than as one of Yia-Yia’s grandchildren.

**EV – Below**
Student made no attempt to include relevant evidence from the text but did include some descriptions to support original ideas.
There are many reasons I love music. One reason I love music is because “the guitar music rings in my ears, and the salty-sweet tastes of Greece fill my mouth.” Another reason I love music is because music makes me feel good. The last reason I love music is because music makes me want to dance.

I learned to dance from my Yia-Yia. I learned by following her steps. There are many reasons that dancing is important to me. One reason dancing is important to me is because dancing is something special my Yia-Yia taught me. Another reason dancing is important to me is because dancing is fun. The last reason dancing is important to me is because dancing helps me remember what my Yia-Yia loved to do.

- No attempt to provide a conclusion (W.4.3e) – WRIT

SUMMARY

COMP – Approaching
Student attempts to demonstrate an understanding of the passage. Student somewhat identified the theme of the text but inconsistently referenced specific details from the text that would demonstrate thorough understanding. Student attempts to present character depth but again lacks sufficient evidence and details to do so.

WRIT- Approaching
Student has demonstrated an understanding of the prompt by explaining why the narrator/character loves music, how the narrator/character learned to dance, and why dancing is important. The student presented the information using organization techniques such as “One reason I love music is...” and “One reason dancing is important to me is...” The student demonstrated accurate use of a variety of transitional words such as “one” and “another” and phrases such as “the last reason” to organize the story and enhance the clear and concise structure of the response. Student somewhat used sensory details such as “salty-sweet taste of Greece,” “music makes me feel good,” and “music makes me want to dance” to convey the relevance of the experiences in relation to addressing the prompt. The student somewhat demonstrated a command of Standard English grammar rules as few words were misspelled and proper punctuation was used.

EV – Approaching
Student inconsistently used specific details from the text to support original story. In one instance the student directly quoted the passage but did not fully weave the quote into the narrative with detail. In other instances the student referred to possible details from the passage (such as, “following her footsteps,” which may refer to Yia-Yia teaching specific steps) though these are not fully explained.
First, how I learned to dance is when me and my family pack and move across the ocean we went on a ship and the sailors taught me how to dance to the music of a pepe when I got a little bit older I started to twirled and whirled that’s when I knew I loved to dance. Then dancing became so important to me because I always held a tane in my heart I would tap out a beat with my toes and the voices of the singers and the perfume of the incense colled around my heard and made my eyes wot. Finally I loved music because it is so fun to dance to the beat of the music and it is also really realzing to me.
Do you want to hear about my grandmother Yia-Yia? Of course you do. My Grandmother Yia-Yia love’s music because she get’s to dance to it. My Grandmother Yia-Yia was born around people that danced. That’s why she dance to music. My grandmother was born in a small village in Greece. I'm just like Yia-Yia because I love music and I love to dance because Yia-Yia taught me. That’s why my Yia-Yia loves the music.

Do you want to know how I learned to dance? Grandmother Yia-Yia taught me. She will always hum around me. One day she showed me this dance. Use we got older she taught use The right steps. She will always say chin up back straight, eyes clear, and steady. At the family dinner we was so proud of her. She was an amazing dancer. She showed use what she can do. That’s how I learned how to dance.

Would you like to hear why dancing is important to me. Dancing is important to me because when Yia-Yia was small everyone danced. Also, if it means a lot to Yia-Yia it means a lot to me. I can also tell it’s important to Yia-Yia because She will always hum and dance and hum again. And she will twirl and whirl.

This is why I look up to Yia-Yia because she is a nice grandmother and a great, great great dancer. She also Always shows me dances. Also I want to be just like her when I grow up.

SUMMARY

COMP – Meets
Student demonstrated an accurate understanding of the passage, including the rationale behind why Yia-Yia loves to dance and why it is important to the family. Student was able to select specific details from the text to emphasize the theme of the passage that serves as a foundation for the student’s original story. The student somewhat demonstrated understanding of character depth but did not fully expand on how Yia-Yia’s character influenced the character as a grandchild.

WRIT – Meets
Student addressed the entire prompt and developed the story with relevant and well-chosen details. The student introduced the topic used a variety of transitional words and phrases as well as a question/answer structure to manage the sequence of events and topics. The student also somewhat used concrete words from the text to convey experiences essential to the original story on the given prompt. Lastly, the student provided a conclusion that readdresses the key details of the story.

EV – Meets
As mentioned above, the student referenced specific details from the passage, which demonstrated a thorough understanding of the characters, events, and theme, and used these details in a cohesive way throughout the original narrative.
When I was little my Yia-Yia use to always put on music and dances. Sometimes I would watch her. Sometimes she would teach how to dance. She would put on some music and grab my hands and we dance. Sometimes she would let me do it by myself and I’m getting good. I love music because you can make happiness everywhere with music on. It makes more fun. You listen to the beat and then dance to it. Music is important to me because it just like art, and its beauty. Music makes me your heart grow bigger. It gives you a chance to get loose and more and have a lot of fun with you family and friends. You get to be free.

- Almost no attempt to identify the larger theme in the response (RL.4.2) - COMP
- Almost no attempt to establish the scenario of pretending to be one of Yia-Yia’s grandchildren - WRIT
- No use of transition words or phrases to manage the sequence of events (W.4.3c) – WRIT
- Almost no attempt to incorporate a conclusion (W.4.3e) - WRIT

**SUMMARY**

**COMP - Approaching**
Student demonstrated accurate understanding of the passage, including why music was important to Yia-Yia and her family. Student attempted to discuss Yia-Yia’s character traits and point of view towards music, dancing, and family. Student did not attempt to address the full complexity of the prompt and did not make connections to the larger themes of tradition and culture. Student response did attempt to create and relate events that were appropriate and consistent with the context of the passage.

**WRIT - Approaching**
Although the student made an attempt to address all three bullet points, the overall response lacked clarity, organization, and narrative structure. The student did not clearly identify the narrator/character as Yia-Yia’s grandchild. Student did attempt to use indirect references to the text to strengthen the response and these matched both the mood and experiences presented in the passage, but these references were not developed enough to address the full complexity of the prompt.

**EV - Below**
Due to the narrative nature of the prompt, the student did not incorporate direct textual evidence into his/her response. The student did make some attempt to place the response within the context of the passage, referencing how Yia-Yia danced while doing chores. Nonetheless, the response still lacked enough supporting details/connection the text to fully address the prompt. More references to the passage, either directly or indirectly would allow the student to better develop a response that addresses the prompt while aligning to the context of the original passage.
Student F

My life with music and dance is important because music and dance are apart of me! I love music because it gives me a good feeling and attitude. Also it makes me feel very special.

I learned how to dance when I was born. The reason I learned when I was born was because when I was born my family had dance around me. When I got bigger my family packed everything we had and crossed the ocean in a ship when we were there I danced with the sailors and birds. I kept the tune in my heart and tapped to the beat.

Dancing is important to me because dancing “makes me feel very happy.” One time I went to a church festival and I danced happily to the guitar string, of the guitar. Even right know while I’m a old grandma I still dance to the music as long as it’s the sailors and birds song.

SUMMARY

COMP - Approaching
Student demonstrated understanding of the passage by appropriately conveying why music and dancing are important to Yia-Yia, citing some details consistent with the context of the passage. The student did not attempt to address the full complexity of the prompt and did not attempt to develop the experience of being one of Yia-Yia’s grandchildren. The student did not make connections to the larger themes of tradition and culture.

WRIT - Approaching
The student made an attempt to address all three bullet points of the prompt and demonstrated some knowledge of narrative conventions but did not identify the narrator/character as one of Yia-Yia’s grandchildren. The student also attempted to incorporate evidence from the text to strengthen the response, but these references lacked appropriate context. Student effectively used words and phrases to convey experiences but lacked sufficient transitions. Student seemed to make an attempt to incorporate a line of dialogue but failed to use dialogue to further develop the events or experience. The student essentially identified details supporting why music and dance are important to Yia-Yia but did not create an original narrative.

EV - Approaching
Although the student made several references to the text, there was little attempt to establish context for these references or to weave them into an original narrative. Evidence seemed to be used as a replacement for actually developing a unique scenario rather than as support.
Student G

......There was a little girl name kimmy and I love to dacne on stage and I lean I tow dance by my mom and dad when I was little and I was nervous that I didn’t get the the steps to the dacne but I keep on try and try unilt I got the dance with my family and friends and is important to me because I would to learn how to dacne with my family because my mom and dad learn how to dacne with their family and friends when they were little but I was nervous when I had to chrne on stage infront of a lots of people but I try my best to work hard to do my best because I love to dance with my family and friend and they Help me learn how to dance in life so I can get better at it and I can grow up to teach my kids how to dance and work hard and have fun on stage so they can do a good Job in life so they can get better and better at dancing and not to be nervous when They are geting ready to dance infont of lots of People to come and watch them do a great Hob on the their dance That they learn from their family and friends in their life so they can get better at it so they can dance more and more in their life that around them but it OK to be nervous when you get ready to dance on stage in life and I can lean lots of things front my family and friends that around me that can Help me when I make a mastike.

- No reference to details from the passage – COMP/EV
- No identification or description of characters, settings, or events from the passage (RL.4.3) - COMP
- No attempt to identify or contextualize passage themes (RL.4.2) - COMP
- No attempt to establish the scenario of pretending to be one of Yia-Yia’s grandchildren – WRIT
- No use of transition words or phrases to manage the sequence of events (W.4.3c) – WRIT
- No attempt to incorporate a conclusion. (W.4.3e) – WRIT

SUMMARY

COMP - Below
The student demonstrated limited understanding of the passage, with no attempt to reference the text or place the response within the context of the story. Student response did attempt to develop the experience of learning to dance but did not connect this experience to Yia-Yia. Because the student did not use details from the passage to develop his/her narrative response, the response failed to demonstrate comprehension of the passage and its themes of tradition and family.

WRIT - Below
The student made an attempt to address two of the three bullet points but failed to address the prompt beyond its most basic aspects. The student did not attempt to identify a character/narrator as Yia-Yia’s grandchild. Overall, the response lacked clarity, organization, and narrative structure. The student did try to develop the experience of learning to dance but did not effectively place this experience within the context of the story.

EV – Below
The student made no attempt to reference the text or develop the response in relation to the story. Therefore, the response lacked enough supporting details/connection the text to fully address the prompt. Student did attempt to incorporate the notion of family into the response but did not develop this idea in relation to Yia-Yia or the original story.
Trends & Suggested Next Steps

Use these guiding questions to analyze the trends you see and determine next steps.

1. **What trends do you notice? How might this help you group students for instruction?**
   - Consider: Do you want to address data across multiple categories (WRIT, COMP, EV) or within a single category?

2. **Based on the trends and groups you’ve identified, what instructional needs should be addressed? What strengths do you see?**
   - Consider: What similarities do you see in student responses within each category? Does it make sense to compare to machine-scored data?

3. **What next steps will you take?**
   - Consider: How will you address gaps moving forward? What does student success look like and how can you build on it?

Here is an example of a summary table that pulls together the results of the sample set of students. Following the table is a set of answers to the guiding questions and next steps based on having identified one trend presented in the student responses. This represents one general approach (irrespective of contextual factors such as ELA curricula, quarterly planning, etc.) for determining possible next steps and is not exclusive or comprehensive.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>COMPREHENSION (COMP)</th>
<th>WRITING (WRIT)</th>
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What trends do you notice? How might this help you group students for instruction?

Students A and G are listed as below across all three categories.

Based on the trends and groups you’ve identified, what instructional needs should be addressed? What strengths do you see?

Looking at the responses of Student A and G, the absence of any passage details may reflect a lack of understanding about what the prompt is asking, a lack of comprehension of the passage, and/or a lack of ability to use details/evidence to support ideas. Student A’s response includes an attempt to answer the three bullet points of the prompt (though not in the context of the passage) and to use them as an organizational strategy for the response while Student G’s response includes a minimal attempt to address two of the bullet points (though not in the context of the passage) but with almost no coherent organizational structure.

What next steps will you take?

Review machine-scored items for Students A and G to help determine if passage comprehension is the priority. If student has not performed well on machine-scored items, consider establishing some instructional priorities around reading comprehension, perhaps focusing on some specific textual complexities present in the passage (i.e. figurative language, characterization). If student has performed well on machine-scored items, consider creating some instructional priorities around reviewing and breaking down PCR prompts to determine what is required in a student response and strategies for planning, organizing, and selecting details for a written response.