



Introduction

An Interesting Tension: Performance Standards and Accountability Measures

Because of today's increasing concerns about the quality of American education, all 50 states have implemented accountability measures designed to illustrate student proficiency relative to state standards. States hold districts accountable for meeting performance goals, attach rewards and sanctions to results of yearly assessments, and provide technical assistance to help build "failing" schools' capacity. This, then, is the current standards-based accountability system.

During the euphoric 1990s, such a system was never envisioned. Tests, to the extent that they impinged upon instruction at all, were imagined to be "tests worth teaching to," instruments augmented by projects and portfolios that would provide a more complete picture of student learning. But as the 1990s drew to a close, there came challenges to this

vision: reliability and validity concerns, standardization problems, the schools' ability to shrink performance gaps within subgroups, and even equity and opportunity-to-learn issues.

As a result, our assessments today are less than what the standards movement promised. They are summative measures, and while they certainly do inform policymakers and parents about student performance, they come too late to inform teachers in order to plan for instruction. And frequently, their feedback to teachers is little more than a numerical score.

The New Standards materials for kindergarten through third grade, by contrast, offer teachers a concrete vision of how proficient reading and writing should look grade by grade and what constitutes a standards-setting performance.

The standards in this book are therefore intended as an extension and companion to official state and district standards documents, an indispensable tool for analyzing children’s literacy skills and setting specific targets for their learning. The New Standards primary literacy standards are designed to serve as a detailed guide for teachers and parents. Through their explicit examples of expected performance, the standards make it easy for parents and teachers to know whether children are meeting rigorous and reasonable expectations and to identify the areas in which students need more work.

Young Children (edited by Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The members of the New Standards Primary Literacy Committee (see pages iv–v for the roster) came to the task of devising a set of practical expectations for early literacy achievement with differing views—especially on the vexing questions regarding “phonics” versus “whole language” as a basis of children’s earliest reading instruction. They joined together to produce this document because they were tired of the perspectives that had divided them and believed that by focusing squarely on what children needed to know and be able to do, rather than on ideologies of how to organize teaching, they could provide a unified set of guidelines for teachers and parents.

As a result, this book focuses directly on the knowledge and skills students should have regardless of the nature of instruction they receive. The document makes clear that all children must learn

⊙ About This Book

Reading and writing are, without doubt, the two most important skills that children must acquire. And the primary school years are an absolutely critical time in this process. The evidence is strong that young people who are not competent readers and writers by the end of third grade may never catch up to their peers.

What, exactly, does it mean to be a competent reader and writer at the age of 8 or 9? What kinds of books should children be able to read fluently and with comprehension? How much reading should they be doing? What kinds of writing should we expect of them? And, most important of all for teachers and parents, what are the steps along the way? What does a child who is developing well as a reader and writer look like? What are warning signs that some special help or more intensive teaching may be needed?

The book you are holding in your hands paints a grade-by-grade picture of the kinds of literacy skills students should develop from kindergarten through third grade. It enriches our understanding of what primary students should know and be able to do, employs user-friendly language, and, with its companion DVD, includes examples of children’s writing, samples of their oral reading, and even videos of children discussing books and following written directions. Drawn from real classrooms, these work samples make clear just how good is good enough in primary reading and writing.

It took nearly two years of work by a distinguished group of educators and researchers to produce this document. Many of the nation’s most eminent experts on reading and writing joined our New Standards Primary Literacy Committee in the endeavor. Five of the panelists also served on the National Research Council committee that produced the book *Preventing Reading Difficulties in*

- Both the print–sound code (“phonics,” “phonemic awareness”) *and* the ability to comprehend and interpret what they read, right from the start. Children’s progress in reading can be tracked by their ability to read benchmark books of graduated levels of difficulty.
- Writing *and* reading. The book gives equal weight to learning reading and writing, linking the skills in one to the other. It shows how children’s earliest spelling attempts are linked to their efforts to master phonics. And it illustrates how attending carefully to the language in books that they read can help children incorporate literary techniques and language in their writings.
- Specific purposes and genres of writing, including narratives, reports, functional writing, and literature. Children are expected to read and write in each of these genres.
- Habits of literacy, including daily writing and reading, the ability to discuss with others what they read, and strategies for evaluating and revising their written work. The standards provide benchmarks for daily practice of reading and writing. Beginning in kindergarten, children should read or have read to them four to six books a day. By third grade, they should read independently each year 30 books of prescribed difficulty from different genres.
- Conventional spelling and the correct uses of punctuation, along with careful choice of vocabulary, style, and syntax in their writing.

How These Standards Are Organized

These standards are organized by grade level, with sections for kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade. Each section begins with a profile of students at that grade level, describing their readiness to learn and activities that will support their progress in reading and writing.

These profiles are not intended to suggest that all children and all programs are—or should be—alike. Rather, they evoke images of real children in real classrooms learning in rich literacy programs: the ultimate purpose of the standards. The profiles serve as a reminder that despite the intentionally stark, precise, and crisp language of the primary literacy standards themselves, teaching children to read and write is complex work. There are as many nuances to this learning process as there are unique human beings.

Three standards in reading and three standards in writing follow the profiles.

Three Sensible Standards in Reading, Three Sensible Standards in Writing

The essential components of learning to read and write, like any complex process, can be segmented in many ways. For ease of use, these standards are organized under three broad headings:

Reading

1. Print–Sound Code
2. Getting the Meaning
3. Reading Habits

Writing

1. Habits and Processes
2. Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres
3. Language Use and Conventions

Four of the standards—Print–Sound Code, Getting the Meaning, Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres, and Language Use and Conventions—deal with knowledge and skills. These standards set end-of-year achievement expectations, but they also include midyear indicators of on-target progress and problems that call for intensive instructional intervention.

Two of the standards—Reading Habits and Writing Habits and Processes—deal with the daily practice of literacy. For these standards, the expectations apply throughout the school year. At each grade level, the standards include guidance about appropriate books for students to read.

Students meet a standard when their overall performance satisfies the expectations often enough and well enough to indicate mastery. Generally, assessing whether students meet a standard requires evaluating a *number of performances* rather than an isolated test performance.

Using This Book

Several features of the design of this work are intended to help make the content accessible and reader friendly.

Reading Standards

- Standard name
- A sidebar key that shows where you are, where you've been, and what comes next
- Still image from the DVD of student reading performances that meet the standard and demonstrate "how good is good enough"
- Insightful commentary that explains the student performances

28 Reading and Writing Grade by Grade
Kindergarten: Reading Standard 1 29

Kindergarten Reading Standard 1
Print-Sound Code

During kindergarten, children should learn the basics of the print-sound code: how words break up into individual sounds and how words are constructed from individual sounds, the alphabet and how letters stand for sounds, and how a string of letters can stand for a string of sounds that make up a word.

Knowledge of Letters and Their Sounds

Children leaving kindergarten should know the letters of the alphabet and many of their corresponding sounds. The precise number of letters and sounds kindergartners should know is not important; what is essential is that children grasp the *idea* of how letters represent sounds. We expect children leaving kindergarten to

- Recognize and name most letters
- Recognize and say the common sounds of most letters and write a letter that goes with a spoken sound
- Use their knowledge of sounds and letters to write phonetically, representing consonant sounds with single letters in the correct sequence

Reading Standard 1
Print-Sound Code
Knowledge of Letters and Their Sounds

Rosanna is asked to write a few simple, regularly spelled words with the consonant-vowel (CV) pattern, such as *go*, the consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) pattern, such as *gas*, *dog*, and *pin*, or the consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant (CCVC) pattern, such as *stop*. Despite some mistakes, Rosanna reveals through her writing that she clearly "gets" the idea that letters represent sounds.

She sounds out the word as she tries to match the sound with the letter that represents it. From her efforts, we know that she can identify some beginning sounds. She is not able to write ending sounds as consistently (although she can say them to herself in preparation for writing). She knows two sounds for the letter *o*. This is evident from her correct spelling of the word *go* and her spelling of "DO" for the word *dog*.

Like many kindergarten children, Rosanna has the most difficulty hearing the middle sounds, including the second sound in a beginning blend and medial vowels. From watching Rosanna try to write the word *stop*, we know she hears the sound that *t* makes in the word because her first attempts show her writing the letters *s* and *t*. When the teacher repeats the word to see if she can identify more sounds, Rosanna erases the *t* from the blend *st* and substitutes a *p*, which represents the ending sound.

We expect children at the end of kindergarten to know the letters of the alphabet and some sounds and to get the idea that letters represent sounds.

Kindergarten Reading Standard 1: Print-Sound Code

- Knowledge of Letters and Their Sounds
- Phonemic Awareness: Segmenting and Blending Sounds
- Reading Words

Kindergarten Reading Standard 2: Getting the Meaning

- Accuracy and Fluency
- Self-Monitoring and Self-Correcting Strategies
- Comprehension

Kindergarten Reading Standard 3: Reading Habits

- Reading a Lot
- Reading Behaviors
- Discussing Books
- Vocabulary

The images and commentary in the reading sections of this book refer to reading performances available on the DVD.

Writing Standards

- Standard name
- A sidebar key that shows where you are, where you've been, and what comes next
- Student work that meets the standard and demonstrates “how good is good enough”
- Informed commentary on the student writing

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Second-Grade Writing Standard 3 Language Use and Conventions

Second graders should be developing fluency as writers, producing longer, more detailed texts, and crafting stories to achieve an effect as their control over the conventions of language increases. Some of their sentences still echo their oral language patterns, while others show their awareness of literary style and other generic forms. Conventions appear more regularly: Periods, capital letters, quotation marks, and exclamation points frequently are used correctly.

The student work samples that appear in the preceding section on Writing Standard 2 also serve to illustrate the range of second graders' developing mastery of language use and conventions.

Second-Grade Writing Standard 1: Habits and Processes

Second-Grade Writing Standard 2: Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres

- Sharing Events, Telling Stories: Narrative Writing or Informational Writing
- Informing Others: Report or Informational Writing
- Getting Things Done: Functional and Procedural Writing
- Producing and Responding to Literature

Second-Grade Writing Standard 3: Language Use and Conventions

- Style and Syntax
- Vocabulary and Word Choice
- Spelling
- Punctuation, Capitalization, and Other Conventions

Style and Syntax

Children meeting standards use a variety of sentence structures by the time they leave second grade. The simple sentences that beginning writers relied on because of the difficulties of forming words have evolved into more complex sentences. By using a variety of sentence structures, second-grade writers show their ability to handle subordination of thought by subordination of structures. While punctuation of such sentences may be erratic or uneven, the sentences themselves show children's increasing proficiency in realizing their thoughts in writing. As children experience greater variety of language in books, speech patterns should be augmented by the more writerly structures we expect in specific genres.

Using One's Own Language

By the end of the year, we expect second-grade students to

- Use all sentence patterns typical of spoken language
- Incorporate transition words and phrases
- Use various embeddings (phrases, modifiers) as well as coordination and subordination

Taking on Language of Authors

By the end of the year, we expect second-grade students to

- Use varying sentence patterns and lengths to slow reading down, speed it up, or create a mood
- Embed literary language where appropriate
- Reproduce sentence structures found in the various genres they are reading

Second Grade: Writing Standard 3 155

Writing Standard 3

Language Use and Conventions

This piece is a simple, informational report on sports in France that meets the standard for Language Use and Conventions.

Note, however, that it does not meet Writing Standard 2, Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres, because it is a simple list, with one- or two-sentence elaborations for each sport and no conclusion.

Style and Syntax

The piece is made up almost entirely of simple sentences with subject and verb constructions. There does appear to be one compound sentence in the piece (the one that begins “The race goes up and down...”), though Patricia uses a period rather than a comma to mark the end of the first clause. The first word after the period is not capitalized, whereas every other word following a period has been capitalized. It is reasonable, therefore, to infer that Patricia meant to write a compound sentence but did not use appropriate punctuation. The overall style of the piece, although somewhat choppy, is reflective of many pieces of informational text.

Vocabulary and Word Choice

Patricia uses vocabulary appropriate for the topic, and her word choice adequately conveys information to the reader. The translation of 4,023 kilometers to 2,500 miles is an example of one writer's attempt to be precise and convey data meaningfully.

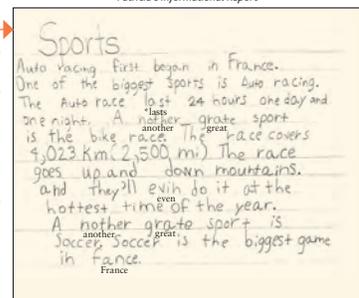
Spelling

The spelling almost uniformly is correct. *Great* (“grate”), *even* (“evin”), and *another* (“A nother”) are misrepresented, but they are easily readable. In the last sentence, the last word is both a misspelling and a capitalization error.

Punctuation, Capitalization, and Other Conventions

There are no other capitalization errors in this piece beyond the use of a capital A in “Auto race”—a logical error given that auto racing is the name of a specific sport. Patricia uses parentheses correctly and also punctuates a conjunction correctly. There is end punctuation for each sentence except the one ending with a parenthesis.

Patricia's Informational Report



*Translation of phonetically spelled words

How Good Is Good Enough?

A major challenge in drafting these standards involved translating an abstract concept into language concrete enough to capture what a proficient performance should look like. A case in point: It is critical for educators to understand the distinction between invisible cognitive processes inside students' minds and visible behavioral indicators that these processes are occurring. For example, retelling a story is one way first graders may indicate that they comprehend what they have read or heard, but the comprehension itself may be invisible. The quality of the retelling contains clues about the accuracy, scope, and depth of each child's comprehension, and it is up to the adult to pick up on these clues and assess their quality.

The New Standards Primary Literacy Standards are made tangible by the reading performances and writing samples that exemplify the expectations and the results. Moreover, the commentary on the student work explains the qualities of performances that meet the standards and answers the often-asked question, How good is good enough? The student work, collected from a diverse range of students in a wide

variety of settings, shows the level of performance expected—and reachable—in these standards.

Reading and writing performances also are included on the DVD that accompanies this book. Included are examples of student writing, student book talks, and retellings/summaries as well as a summary version of the grade-level expectations. The ultimate value of the DVD is to put a real face on some of the students whose performances are featured in the document. Teachers especially will find them valuable because actually seeing a student demonstrate proficiency is much more enlightening than mere performance descriptors.

The New Standards Primary Literacy Standards ask much of children and therefore of their teachers and parents. If one visited an “average” school in the United States today, few children would be able to meet all of the standards laid out in this book. But we know that children can *learn* to perform at the levels called for by the standards. We know this because we based our expectations on the performances of children in good literacy programs of various kinds throughout the country. The standards set out realistic expectations for children who are taught well. They are demanding because nothing less will prepare children for their futures.