

# **STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMIC READINESS (STAAR®)**

## **Grades 4 and 7 Writing**

**Victoria Young  
Director of Reading, Writing, and  
Social Studies Assessments  
Texas Education Agency**

# 2013 STAAR Writing Grade 4 Statewide Distributions

2

Personal Narrative Summed Scores		Expository Summed Scores	
1/1 = 2	21%	1/1 = 2	21%
1/2 = 3	16%	1/2 = 3	17%
2/2 = 4	27%	2/2 = 4	36%
2/3 = 5	16%	2/3 = 5	15%
3/3 = 6	12%	3/3 = 6	8%
3/4 = 7	5%	3/4 = 7	2%
4/4 = 8	2%	4/4 = 8	1%

# 2013 STAAR Writing Grade 7 Statewide Distributions

Personal Narrative Summed Scores		Expository Summed Scores	
1/1 = 2	6%	1/1 = 2	10%
1/2 = 3	9%	1/2 = 3	13%
2/2 = 4	27%	2/2 = 4	35%
2/3 = 5	23%	2/3 = 5	21%
3/3 = 6	22%	3/3 = 6	14%
3/4 = 7	8%	3/4 = 7	5%
4/4 = 8	4%	4/4 = 8	2%

# Choosing the “Right” Personal Experience

4

**All personal experiences are not created equal. Teach students to ask themselves these questions when choosing which experience to write about.**

- Does the experience really “fit” the prompt? (You’ re getting at responsiveness here.)**
- Is this experience important, meaningful, or memorable to me?**
- Do I remember this experience well enough to write about it in detail?**
- Can I retell this experience effectively in one page? (You want to make sure the experience isn’ t too big for 26 lines.)**

# Personal Narrative Problems That Affect the Score

5

- **The student writes an expository composition instead of a story.**
- **The story is not realistic in terms of the student's age.**
- **The student includes extraneous details or events that weaken the narrative presentation, have a negative impact on development, and take up valuable space.**

# Personal Narrative

## Problems That Affect the Score

- **There are disruptions in the story line, usually because the student has difficulty moving logically and smoothly from one sentence (or event) to another.**
- **The student does not reflect on or consider the importance or impact of the experience (required for a score of 3 or 4 in 7<sup>th</sup> grade; not required but good to have in 4<sup>th</sup> grade).**
- **The student's writing is weak at the word and/or sentence level, causing the narrative presentation to be uncontrolled or superficial.**

# Grade 4 Personal Narrative

## Score of 2—Spring 2013

7

**Write about a time when someone said you did a great job.**

**Have you ever had someone said you did a great job. I know I had it was when I was at school doing a reading test I made a 93 on it.**

**First of all, when I got to school I went to go eat brefast before I went inside my classroom. When it was 8:15 I ask my teacher if I can go to the bookfair to buy something for me. My teacher told me to git back at 8:30 to go to Mrs. Thompsons. After Mrs. Thompsons I went to go take Abby to the bookfair to buy a pencil. Then I went to the sciencelab to take my reading test.**

# Grade 4 Personal Narrative

## Score of 2—Spring 2013

8

Scend of all, Mrs. Lewis gave me a reading passage to take. I reded the story then I went to question one and answed it. Then I was on question 10. I went in the passage to find the answer to question 10. The I was on question 13 was easy

Finally of all I was done with my reading test. I told Mrs. Lewis can you grade me reading test she told me ok. I crossed my finger if it was 85, 93, or a 100. Mrs. Lewis told me I passed I ask if I can see my grade it was a 93. I told Mrs. Lewis my mom, granma, granpa, and dad will be happy of me.

Mrs. Lewis told me I did a great job.

**BASIC WRITING = SCORE OF 2**



# Grade 4 Personal Narrative

## Score of 3—Spring 2013

**Write about a time when someone said you did a great job.**

**Hi my name is Sarah, and I am going to tell you about the time someone said “great job Sarah!”**

**When I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, I was in the Spelling Bee. I thought the Spelling Bee was going to be difficult but it wasn't. I practiced and practiced. By the time I knew it it was the Spelling Bee.**

**I woke up got ready and then dashed to school. By the time I knew it it was my turn! I was sweating like a pig my palms were shaking. Then they gave me the word it was splendid. I tried to spell the word, but when I spelled it, I got it wrong! I couldn't believe it**

# Grade 4 Personal Narrative

## Score of 3—Spring 2013

10

**I LOST L-O-S-T lost! I was so disipointed in myself. When the game was over I went up to my mom. She said “I did a great job!” Then a teacher named Mrs. Bishop came up to me and pat me on the back, and gave me a pin it had a little bee on it. She told me “I did a great job.” I was happy.**

**SATISFACTORY WRITING = SCORE OF 3**

# Grade 7 Personal Narrative

## Score of 2—Spring 2013

11

**Write a personal narrative about a time when you had fun participating in an activity with other people.**

**Last summer I went to Galvezston with some of my family. First we stayed in the Hotele Galvez because Paw Paw and I like to stay in the Galvez. I like to stay there because there is a big pool with a hot tub and a pool bar. I think he likes to watch the people. After that we stayed at our beach house, pretty cool place there's a nice view of the ocean. We went out to eat almost every breafest, lunch, and denner, one night we just had a shrimp salad I met some nice people whos beach house was right next store. They where**

# Grade 7 Personal Narrative

## Score of 2—Spring 2013

12

all younger but still had fun with them any way. We hunted for crabs got one then let it go. Aunt Cindy rented a golf cart for Paw Paw, didn't get to use it because My Mother and I took it and went to a beach house sale. Found a lot of stuff for our beach house. I drove that thing every where, had a blast, even found a cool club for people with beach houses in the area. I'll be there next summer party.

**BASIC WRITING = SCORE OF 2**

# Grade 7 Personal Narrative

## Score of 4—Spring 2013

Now usually I'm not a very outgoing person. I usually spend my free time in my room on the internet or watching TV until the wee hours of the day. Don't get me wrong, I have my circle of friends. I just like some alone time every now and then. However, there was one occasion when that sort of changed.

It was Friday, the day of the Valentine's Day Dance. I, being who I am, thought, "Blegh," and didn't feel like going. So I texted my friend and said, "Are you going to the dance?" and she replied, "Yeah. Are you?" so of course I said no. She then told me, "Come on, you should! It'll be fun." After some persuading, I hesitantly agreed. We hopped in her car and arrived at the dance a few minutes after. She pulled me in the building and I saw exactly what I had pictured: A group of guys on one side, a group of

# Grade 7 Personal Narrative

## Score of 4—Spring 2013

girls on the other, with no two being brave enough to step out to the middle and bust a move. I thought sarcastically, “Oh great, this night’ ll go down without a hitch.” But, despite my bitterness, when some more people showed up, the DJ played good music, and I – never thought I would say this – was having a great time. I danced my butt off with my friends and got all hyped up on soda. It was actually a really fun night!

So, if this hasn’ t proved to you how much one event with friends can change a person’ s attitude, I don’ t know what will. All I know is it really was an awesome night, and honestly, – don’ t tell anyone – but I think I’ d like to do it again sometime.

**ACCOMPLISHED WRITING = SCORE OF 4**

# Expository

## Problems That Affect the Score

15

- **The central idea (grade 4) or controlling idea (grade 7) is too broad or general. An overly broad or general central/controlling idea contributes to “all-over-the-place” development, while a clear and focused central/controlling idea (early in the paper) helps students “rein in” development.**
- **The narrative framing devices that students are using to get “in” and “out” of the essay have a negative impact on development because they don’t contribute anything to the explanation and take up valuable space (sometimes 1/3 of the paper).**

# Expository

## Problems That Affect the Score

16

- **The student includes too many ideas or clusters of ideas that are related to the prompt but not to each other. The development of these ideas or clusters tends to be brief, partial, and superficial rather than narrow, deep, and thoughtful. All the development is at the same level because the student doesn't "build" from one idea to the next.**
- **The sentence-to-sentence progression is not smooth and controlled. Weak progression results from repetition, wordiness, or "jumping" from sentence to sentence or idea to idea.**



# Expository Problems That Affect the Score

17

## Two Key Points

- 1) **The best development is real, based on a student's own experiences and thinking about the world.**
- 2) **Development can't happen without good progression, and good progression requires meaningful transitions. Students have to thread sentences together (each sentence to the next) in order to build depth.**

# Expository Problems That Affect the Score

18

- The student's word choice is limited, general, or imprecise.
- The student has problems with sentence boundaries and conventions.

## Remember

Control at the word and sentence level is a necessary for effectiveness at the paragraph and essay level.

# Grade 4 Expository Score of 1—Spring 2013

## Write about your favorite time of year

Have you ever been out of town during the summer?  
I have when I was in Thrd graid.

It was all in the school when I was abuot to get out of school. Then then the techer tolld us to get our backpacks so that we can leve. When The bell rang we went out said tolld Mr. Carter baie and my mom pickt me and my brothe so dat we can leve.

Durin the summer the tempetr got hotr each day lade sevendy-eath prsent fornhigh. When we go outsaid we start to set a lot and get to play because in wintr it

# Grade 4 Expository Score of 1—Spring 2013

20

gets coldr.

Whe it' s summer you get sleep lait and wach tv when  
ever you wont and sleep until ten-Thrty or nain-forty.

It was a good summer even do it was hot.

**VERY LIMITED WRITING = SCORE OF 1**

# Grade 4 Expository Score of 2—Spring 2013

I am very very excited! Spring is starting to roll in. Now I can say good bye cold weather, and hello nice weather. Well you're probably thinking that Spring is just a regular season, but I will tell you why I like Spring so much.

The first reason is that my birth day is in Spring, but that is just one reason. I have lots more! Reason two is the middle reason why I love this season.

The second reason is the nature the flowers start to bloom, the plants start to grow, and the grass is green. That makes me happy, but let's move on to reason three. Reason three is a reason everyone loves.

# Grade 4 Expository Score of 2—Spring 2013

22

The therd reason is Spring! Braek! That means no school no work for a whole week. You can go on vacation sit and read. You can do anything you want. I have lots and lot of more reasons why, but thoughts are the three reasons that make me love Spring the most out of all the other the seasons.

**BASIC WRITING = SCORE OF 2**

# Grade 4 Expository

## Score of 3—Spring 2013

Personaly, I think winter is the best season of them all. You might disagree with me but that won't change my mind one bit. I think winter is the best season because it snows and is cold. I like cold weather a lot so I like winter. I also love snow, but it doesn't always snow in Texas, but it sure does were my family goes for the winter. My family goes to Winter Park Colorado every winter and it snows tons. We go there on a ski trip and play in the snow lots. Winter is a very butifull time of year because it snows and the whole ground is coverd in white, sparkling, glittering snow. It is very butifull in my opinion.

I also like winter because I get to spend more time

# Grade 4 Expository

## Score of 3—Spring 2013

24

with my family. My dad is a firefighter and my mom is a teacher and they both get vacation time and use it for winter when we go on vacation. Winter is a very special time of the year because I have a lot of fun playing in the snow and sledding down hills. I like winter most because it brings Christmas Spirit and lots of holiday fun.

Winter is very special to me because I love snow, cold weather and being with my family. I love cold weather, I love snow, I love traveling and I love winter.

**SATISFACTORY WRITING = SCORE OF 3**



# Grade 7 Expository Score of 1—Spring 2013

25

**Write an essay explaining the importance of never giving up.**

**“I believe that you should never give up.” If you give up you may never be successful. In order to be successful you are gonna have obstacles to go through, but you never give up.**

**For example on our last Saturday softball game I wanted to play catcher I was kinda scared to play it though. So what I got hit the bat a couple of times by me not giving up I’ m our new starting catcher.**

**In basketball season I worked really really hard I went**

# Grade 7 Expository Score of 1—Spring 2013

26

through all obstacles It took to make A-team be starting point guard and being in the first five to play. See I just showed you with hard work and not giving up you can be successful in what ever you do.

“I believe that you should never give up.” If you give up you may never be successful. In order to be successful are going have obstacles to go through, but you never give up!

**VERY LIMITED WRITING = SCORE OF 1**

# **Grade 7 Expository Score of 2—Spring 2013**

**There is always going to be a bump in the road somewhere in life. No matter what, you need to keep moving forward.**

**In everyday life we run across things that may be challenging for us. Some people just give up and say “I’m tired of this.” Others aren’t like that. They give it their all and don’t let anything stop them. Honestly, where would we be in this world if NASA never went to space, technology was never invented, or even if Einstein gave up and never figured out  $E=MC^2$ . Nowhere! If any of that never happened a lot of us would be clueless about space, no computers, t.v.s, cell phones, and even science and math. When the**

# Grade 7 Expository Score of 2—Spring 2013

28

going gets tuff the tuff keep going.

If everyone gave up we would be living in a world of quitters. Never give up no matter what.

**BASIC WRITING = SCORE OF 2**

# Grade 7 Expository

## Score of 3—Spring 2013

**Giving up is not an option. You have to fight and stay strong. When you don't give up you show how persistent you can be.**

**When I was in Kindergarten my private school had ballet lessons. Anyone who was interested could join. I could not leap to save my life. I just didn't know how to do it. I did not quit. I kept practicing until I got it right. I am still in ballet to this day, and I am the best leaper in my class.**

**In P.E. every semester we do a fitness test called the pacer. You have to pace yourself and push yourself to keep running. Last semester I was really nervous. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to push myself. When I**

# Grade 7 Expository Score of 3—Spring 2013

got up there and actually ran I was the last one on the court. I ran 45 paces! I didn't give up on myself and I was able to keep going.

When you fight and stay strong it is easier to meet your goals. When you don't give up you prove how strong you can be. When you set your mind to it you can make it happen.

**SATISFACTORY WRITING = SCORE OF 3**

# **Grade 7 Expository Score of 4—Spring 2013**

**Never give up. I hear that phrase a lot – from my parents, in songs, at school. Recently I wondered why it was spoken so often. I think I have finally come to the conclusion of why. I have never heard any football player say “Well, our team was down by a touchdown, so I just figured, why bother!? My team and I gave up, so we lost.” I have also never heard a police officer say “Well, I was chasing the criminal, but he was pretty crafty, so I gave up.” Such things would be absurd to hear.**

**I never hear people say that because they have a job, a task, a duty to complete or a purpose to fulfil. A police officer has to arrest criminals because they are**

# Grade 7 Expository

## Score of 4—Spring 2013

dangerous. A football player has to try so he does not let his team and fans down. No community would ever get anything done if they gave up at every single failure. So many of our inventions are the result of people continuing to persevere through hardships. If nobody ever tried, no football team would ever go to the Super Bowl, no criminal would ever get arrested, and nothing would ever be invented. Humans are imperfect, so it takes many tries before something turns out right. Thomas Edison made so many failed light bulbs, I bet he lost count! He once said, “I have not failed. I have just found 1,000 ways that don’t work.” Even after that many mistakes, he kept trying.



# Grade 7 Expository

## Score of 4—Spring 2013

If he had not, we would still have candles and oil lamps as our source of light.

Now, whenever I start to give up, I can remember his words. I can find encouragement in all the people around me who keep trying, because life does not end because of some failures, but it continues on through those, because of those who overcame their obstacles. No matter how intimidating and daunting whatever tasks lay before me may be, it is my job to overcome the roadblocks and leap over the hurdles. I will never give up.

**ACCOMPLISHED WRITING = SCORE OF 4**

# Improving Writing Scores

## Some Final Thoughts

34

- **Good writing is impossible without good thinking.**
- **Writing is a process; it is NOT the product of following a specific pattern or filling in the boxes.**
- **Planning and revision are especially important given the space constraints of 26 lines.**

# Improving Writing Scores

## Some Final Thoughts

35

- **Real improvement can't happen unless students can apply the concepts, skills, vocabulary, and grammar they're being taught. Application is hard—it takes time and practice!**
- **The score an essay receives is dependent more on the quality of the writing than on its length. The more skillfully crafted a piece is, the higher its score.**

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Victoria Young**  
**Director of Reading, Writing, and Social**  
**Studies Assessments**  
**Texas Education Agency**  
**512-463-9536**  
**[victoria.young@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:victoria.young@tea.state.tx.us)**