

Inspiring All Students to Excel

Newtown Public Schools



Writing Instruction in Newtown, Grades 3-4

A Parent Resource Guide

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The Writing Process

Although no two writers are exactly alike, there is a general process that most writers use when creating a piece of writing. The *Writing Process* is promoted in our classrooms and is widely accepted as a “best practice” in English Language Arts Instruction (Temple, et. Al.). There are stages within the writing process and those stages build upon one another. The writing piece develops as the student and teacher confer throughout the process.

Prewriting

Writing instruction often begins with a brainstorming session or some other type of prewriting activity that helps writers think through what they will write about that day. Whether the class is writing in a specific genre or for a specific purpose, this is the time for students to generate individual ideas for writing. It is the “getting ready to write” step in the process.

Drafting

After students have been given time to generate ideas and to envision what their writing pieces might become, they are asked to write a first draft. During the drafting stage, writers are encouraged to express their thoughts without the constraints of editing. Students know that they will be given time to revise and edit their final pieces.

Revising

When students revise, they do much more than just fix their writing. Instead, they change it for the better. Revising may include changing words, rewording a sentence, or even rewriting an entire paragraph. This is the stage when writers reflect on the *best* way to refine their writing.

Editing

Yes, rest assured, editing does play an important role in all writing process pieces. The editing stage is a time to fix spelling errors, correct grammatical mistakes, and double-check that the students are communicating in precise ways to an audience. However, the editing process looks different from year to year. Kindergarten students may be expected to edit for capital letters at the beginning of sentences, while second graders may be expected to apply rules of punctuation consistently.

Publishing

The final step of the writing process is publishing. This stage is often a favorite for many writers. It is when they make their writing *public* in some way. Published pieces are polished through the revising and editing stages and are in final draft form, using conventional spelling and grammar. Exceptions to this may be in kindergarten and early first grade when writers are beginning to understand what it means to draft a piece and

c
b

- organizing a class writing celebration for parents and/or peers
- including finished pieces in the classroom library
- submitting a writing piece to a contest
- presenting a piece on a webpage
- reading aloud a piece on the local school TV channel
- creating a picture book for younger children to read
- writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper
- displaying student writing for others to see

Writers often need an audience to encourage them to continue writing. Authentic, meaningful purposes for publishing help keep writers engaged throughout the year.

By using the writing process to help students move from generating ideas to publishing, students are able to communicate more effectively.

Writing Curriculum Expectations by Grade

There are specific writing outcomes expected of all of our writers that are listed in our district writing curriculum and that are part of the Connecticut Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Below is an abbreviated list of expectations by grade. You may access the entire CCSS at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&Q=320954>

Kindergarten

- Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events. Tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.
- With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including opportunities to collaborate with peers.
- Participate in shared research and writing projects
- Newtown specific expectation: kindergarten students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, and informational.
- Newtown specific expectation: kindergarten students will write daily using the stages of the writing process when appropriate.
- Newtown specific expectation: kindergarten students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

First Grade

- Write informative/explanatory texts in which students name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.
- Write narratives in which students recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order (e.g., first, then, next, last), and provide some sense of closure.
- Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of “how-to” books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions).
- Newtown specific expectation: first grade students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, explanatory, memoir, etc.
- Newtown specific expectation: first grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

Second Grade

- Write informative/explanatory texts in which students introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
- Write narratives in which students recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.
- Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).

- Newtown specific expectation: second grade students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, explanatory, memoir, etc.
- Newtown specific expectation: second grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

Third Grade

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
 - a. Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.
 - b. Provide reasons that support the opinion. Use linking words and phrases (e.g., *because, therefore, since, for example*) to connect opinion and reasons.
 - c. Provide a concluding statement or section.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
 - a. Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aid comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.
 - c. Use linking words and phrases (e.g., *also, another, and, more, but*) to connect ideas within categories of information.
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
 - a. Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
 - b. Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
 - c. Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
 - d. Provide a sense of closure.
4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing, as needed, by planning, revising, and editing.
5. With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
6. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
7. Newtown specific expectation: third grade students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, explanatory, memoir, etc.
8. Newtown specific expectation: third grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

Fourth Grade

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
 - a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
 - b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
 - c. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., *for instance, in order to, in addition*).
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
 - a. Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia, when useful, to aid comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
 - c. Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., *another, for example, also, because*).
 - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform or explain the topic.
 - e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
 - a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
 - b. Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or to show the responses of characters to situations.
 - c. Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
 - d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
6. With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing, as well as, to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

7. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
8. Newtown specific expectation: fourth grade students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, explanatory, memoir, etc.
9. Newtown specific expectation: fourth grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

Fifth Grade

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
 - a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
 - b. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
 - c. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *consequently*, *specifically*).
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
 - a. Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia, when useful, to aid comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
 - c. Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *in contrast*, *especially*).
 - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform or explain the topic.
 - e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
 - a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
 - c. Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
 - d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
4. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing, as needed, by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

5. With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting.
6. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
7. Newtown specific expectation: fifth grade students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, explanatory, and persuasive.
8. Newtown specific expectation: fifth grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

Sixth Grade

1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
 - a. Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
 - b. Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
 - b. Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
 - c. Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
 - a. Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia, when useful, to aid comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
 - c. Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
 - e. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform or explain the topic.
 - f. Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - g. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
 - d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
4. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing, as well as, to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.
 5. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
 6. Newtown specific expectation: sixth grade students will write in a variety of genres, including memoir, mystery, poetry, and explanatory.
 7. Newtown specific expectation: sixth grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

Seventh Grade

1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
 - a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
 - b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
 - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and to clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.
 - d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
 - a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

- b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
 - c. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
 - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
 - e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
 - a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
 - d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and to convey experiences and events.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.
 4. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.
 5. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
 6. Newtown specific expectation: seventh grade students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, explanatory, memoir, etc.
 7. Newtown specific expectation: seventh grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

Eighth Grade

1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
 - a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
 - b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
 - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and to clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
 - d. Establish and maintain a formal style.

- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
 - a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
 - c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
 - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
 - e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
 - a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and to show the relationships among experiences and events.
 - d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.
4. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
5. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
6. Newtown specific expectation: eighth grade students will write in a variety of genres, including personal narrative, poetry, explanatory, memoir, etc.
7. Newtown specific expectation: eighth grade students will be responsible for editing writing pieces using the district editing checklist.

How is Writing Progress Assessed?

Utilizing District Rubrics and Common Writing Experiences

As part of Newtown's mission, teachers strive to provide students with an unparalleled education and to prepare them to be dynamic contributors to the global community. One way teachers continue to work toward that goal is by finding common writing skills and documenting students' growth over time. The purpose of an analytical rubric is to guide instruction and to target specific student needs. When students write a common writing assignment, the teacher has the ability to discern which skills the students need to work on, based on their rubric scores.

The Analytical Rubric is broken into three main writing elements and their specific components: organization, craft/ idea development, and conventions.

In the **organization** section of the rubric, students are asked the question, *Does my story make sense?* At different points in their educational journey, this question will mean different things. For example, in the primary grades, students will concentrate on the emerging phases of author's craft. They will experiment with characters, setting, and developing a budding plot line that leads to some kind of conclusion. As they continue on their writing journey, students begin to add more sophisticated plotline elements. For example, students are expected to have a theme or an author's purpose in their pieces while still demonstrating strong control of the plotline's beginning, middle, and end.

In the **craft and idea development** portion of the rubric, students are asked the question: *How does the story develop from beginning to end?* In order for a writer's work to make sense, he/she must master the skill of internal and external transitions. Transitional words and phrases guide a reader through a story. In the early grades, words like first, secondly, and then are used. As writers mature, so will their transitional phrases. For example, a more sophisticated writer will use phrases like *in the next moment*, or *in addition*. Transitional words and phrases tie the ideas of the piece together and create fluency in the writer's piece. It is through writer's craft techniques that students, year after year, will develop and utilize a toolbox of elaboration. Elaboration is what makes students' stories come to life and find an individual voice that is specific to the individual author. For example, during a narrative piece students will start experimenting with elements such as personification, making non human objects take on human characteristics,(i.e. a dog talking to his owner when asked a question), or simile (making a connection between two ideas using like or as, *he was as fast as lightning*).

By experimenting with different bits of voice and author's craft, students will start to exhibit a sense of humor in their writing, and their stories will take on a unique

tone or mood. Students might start experimenting with different sentence types: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. They will utilize different starting phrases to vary their sentence structures and to emphasize a point. For example, in a student's initial sentence he/she may write: *The dog ran into the woods. He was barking.* Students will be encouraged to add more details and to combine their ideas: *The dog ran quickly into the woods, barking as he ran.* Later on, even more details, sentence variety and stronger word choices will be expected: *Without hesitation, the dog sprinted into the woods yelping after the wounded rabbit.*

In the **conventions** portion of the rubric, students work to strengthen their editing and revising skills to exhibit proper punctuation, spelling, and capitalization rules. In order to promote creativity and to cultivate the love of writing, students are taught to, first, get their ideas on paper, allowing their creative minds to create a piece of writing that is imaginative and personal. It is during the second phase of the writing process that students become active editors of their work. This groundwork is developed in the early grades as students work and rework drafts of their work with teacher assistance and modeling. It is through focused areas of instruction and discreet skill instruction that students will make the transfer from direct editing to natural writing. It is through practice and constant editing, an author's philosophy that a piece can always be improved, and through teacher conferences, that individual children master the art of writing.

Good writing is transcendent of form. Whether a student is writing a short story, a journal entry, or an informational report, good writing has a continuous thread of good organization, transitional words or phrases, strong paragraphing, including topic sentences, and good elaboration techniques. It is through editing and revising that good drafting becomes polished writing. The analytical rubrics allow teachers to concentrate on specific students' needs and instruct accordingly. Utilizing this tool not only allows teachers to guide individualized instruction and but it also gives students the language to speak to their writing as authors. In order to be a good writer, students need to be exposed to good literature. Contact your local librarian or classroom teacher for "just right" recommendations.

Samples of the district writing rubrics for third and fourth grades are in the following section of this document.

**Newtown Writing Rubrics
Grades 3 and 4**

3rd GRADE ANALYTICAL NARRATIVE WRITING RUBRIC
NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

		1 - Emerging	2 - Developing	3 - Meeting Standard	4 - Exceeding Standard	
<p>Organization</p> <p><i>Does the story make sense?</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story shows some evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characters Setting Problem or a goal Event(s) show some sequence Resolution Little or no focus On topic some of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story shows evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characters Setting Problem or a goal Sequence of events leads to a resolution Resolution May use a variety of transition words effectively (e.g. first, next, then) Maintains focus most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story shows evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characters Setting Problem or a goal Logical sequence of events Reasonable resolution Uses transitions to move the story along smoothly (e.g. suddenly, after a while) Maintains focus throughout the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story has an advanced organizational plan (i.e. flashback) that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Characters Setting Problem or a goal Logical sequence of events Strong resolution with an extended ending (thought, feeling, etc.) Story is controlled and interesting Story has a message, purpose, or lesson learned 	
	<p>Craft/ Idea Development</p> <p><i>How does the story develop from beginning to end?</i></p>	Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to communicate ideas Some logical progression of thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sentences make sense Writes so the reader understands the events Logical progression of thought most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing flows without many reader assumptions. Logical progression of thought all of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing flows without reader assumptions Writes so the reader understands the events and how they are clearly connected Logical progression of thought all of the time
		Elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a thought, action or feeling to make a picture in the reader's mind Uses some supporting details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses thoughts, feelings or actions to make a picture in the reader's mind Uses supporting details Develops one story event or element by using multiple sentences to expand an idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses words to make a picture in the reader's mind most of the time. (thoughts, feelings, or dialogue) Uses specific supporting details. Communicates humor, an attitude, or emotion that shows the writer's personality Develops story elements and events by using multiple sentences to expand an idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses words to make a picture in the reader's mind throughout (thoughts, feelings, or dialogue) Consistently uses specific supporting details. Uses a literary device such as simile or personification in a meaningful way Communicates humor, an attitude, or emotion that shows the writer's personality Story has a tone or mood
Sentences		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses mostly simple sentences <p><i>Or</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragments, run-on, or on-and-on sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a variety of sentence structures that may include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mix of short and longer sentences or Sentences that begin in different ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a variety of sentence structures that include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mix of short and longer sentences and Two or more sentences that begin in different ways (e.g. therefore, since, for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of sentence structures are effectively used throughout the piece (e.g. adverbial phrase, prepositional phrase) 	
<p>Conventions</p> <p><i>Is there evidence of proofreading strategies and application?</i></p>	Spelling/Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some high frequency words are spelled correctly Unknown words are spelled phonetically Applies rules of capitalization (e.g. beginning of a sentence, proper names, dates, months) some of the time. Attempts rules of punctuation (end and within sentences ex. commas in a series, date, city and state, possessives, and/or contractions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most high frequency words are spelled correctly Most phonetically regular words are spelled accurately Applies rules of capitalization (ex. beginning of a sentence, proper names) Applies rules of punctuation (ending marks, commas in a series, date, city and state, contractions) most of the time Attempts use of paragraph structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most high frequency words and phonetically regular words are correct Challenging words are spelled phonetically Applies rules of capitalization (e.g. beginning of a sentence, first word in quotation marks, person's title, proper names, dates, months) Applies rules of punctuation (end and within sentences e.g. quotation marks, commas in a series, date, city and state, apostrophes to show possession and contractions) Uses paragraph structure by indenting or spacing or the student indicates a new paragraph in their editing with a paragraph symbol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most high frequency words and phonetically regular words are correct Uses conventional spelling for high frequency and other studied words and add suffixes to base words (e.g. sitting, smiled, cries, happiness) Applies rules of capitalization (e.g. beginning of a sentence, person's title, proper names, dates, months) Applies rules of punctuation (end and within sentences e.g. quotation marks, commas in a series, date, city and state, apostrophes to show possession and contractions) Correctly uses frequently confused words (e.g. homophones) Uses paragraph structure by indenting or the student indicates a new paragraph in their editing with a paragraph symbol 	

4th GRADE ANALYTICAL NARRATIVE WRITING RUBRIC
 NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

		1 - Emerging	2 - Developing	3 - Meeting Standard	4 - Exceeding Standard
<p>Organization</p> <p><i>Does the story make sense?</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story shows evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Characters ○ Setting ○ Problem or a goal ○ Logical sequence of events ○ Resolution ○ Use of transition words • Sentences flow some of the time • Maintains focus some of the time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story shows evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Characters ○ Setting ○ Problem or a goal ○ Logical sequence of events ○ Reasonable resolution • Makes transitions effectively to move the story along (e.g. temporal words, later, next) • Maintains focus throughout most of the piece. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story shows clear and coherent development that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Characters ○ Setting ○ Problem or a goal ○ Logical sequence of events ○ Strong resolution with an extended ending (thought, feeling, etc.) • Makes transitions effectively to move the story along (e.g. temporal words, later, next) • Maintains focus throughout the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story has an advanced organizational plan (e.g. flashback) that includes at least 4 of the 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well developed characters ○ Descriptive setting ○ Problem or goal ○ Theme, purpose or lesson learned ○ Strong resolution with an extended ending (thought, feeling, etc.) • Uses a variety of transition words and phrases to effectively move the story along. • Events of the story are logically sequenced and purposeful to the resolution.
<p>Craft/Idea Development</p> <p><i>How does the story develop from beginning to end?</i></p>	Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is sometimes interrupted and the reader may need to make some assumptions or personal interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences make sense • Writes so the reader understands most events • Logical progression of thought most of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing flows without reader assumptions • Writes so the reader understands the events and how they are clearly connected • Logical progression of thought all of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing flows clearly from one idea to another without reader assumptions. • All events of the story are logical and the sequence of events enhances the story. (e.g. contributes to the pace of the story)
	Elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses thoughts, feelings or actions to make a picture in the reader's mind • Uses supporting details • Develops one story event or element by using multiple sentences to expand an idea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses thoughts, feelings, actions or dialogue to make a picture in the reader's mind • Uses specific supporting details. • Develops story elements and events by using multiple sentences to expand an idea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses thoughts, feelings, actions or dialogue to make a picture in the reader's mind • Consistently uses specific supporting details to expand narrative • Uses a literary device in a meaningful way (e.g. simile, personification) • Communicates humor, an attitude, or emotion that shows the writer's personality • Develops story elements and events by using multiple sentences to expand an idea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer uses vivid descriptions and word choice to create plot and develop characters. • Writer effectively uses author's craft (word choice, vivid verbs, flashback, simile, metaphor, personification, dialogue) effectively throughout the story. • Story has tone or mood. • Communicates humor, an attitude, or emotion that shows the writer's personality
	Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of sentence structures that may include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A mix of short and longer sentences or sentences that begin in different ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of sentence structures that include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A mix of short and longer sentences and • Two or more sentences that begin in different ways (therefore, since, for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of sentence structures are effectively used throughout the piece (e.g. adverbial phrase, prepositional phrase) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of sentence structures are effectively used throughout the piece (e.g. adverbial phrase, prepositional phrase) • Experiments with alternative writing styles when appropriate (e.g. fragments in dialogue, purposeful run-ons)

4th GRADE ANALYTICAL NARRATIVE WRITING RUBRIC
NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

	Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of sentence structures that may include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A mix of short and longer sentences or sentences that begin in different ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of sentence structures that include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A mix of short and longer sentences and • Two or more sentences that begin in different ways (therefore, since, for example) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of sentence structures are effectively used throughout the piece (e.g. adverbial phrase, prepositional phrase) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of sentence structures are effectively used throughout the piece (e.g. adverbial phrase, prepositional phrase) • Experiments with alternative writing styles when appropriate (e.g. fragments in dialogue, purposeful run-ons)
<p style="text-align: center;">Conventions</p> <p><i>Is there evidence of proofreading strategies and application?</i></p>	Spelling/Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most high frequency and phonetically regular words are spelled correctly • Applies rules of capitalization (e.g. beginning of a sentence, proper names, dates, months) • Applies rules of punctuation (end and within sentences e.g. commas in a series, date, city and state, possessives, and contractions) • Attempts paragraph structure by indenting or spacing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most high frequency words and phonetically regular words are correct • Challenging words are spelled phonetically • Applies rules of capitalization (e.g. beginning of a sentence, first word in quotation marks, person’s title, proper names, dates, months) • Applies rules of punctuation (end and within sentences e.g. quotation marks, commas in a series, date, city and state, apostrophes to show possession and contractions) • Uses paragraph structure by indenting or spacing or the student indicates a new paragraph in their editing with a paragraph symbol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High frequency words and phonetically regular words are correct • Use conventional spelling for high frequency and other studied words and add suffixes to base words (e.g. sitting, smiled, cries, happiness) • Applies rules of capitalization (e.g. beginning of a sentence, first word in quotation marks, person’s title, proper names, dates, months) • Applies rules of punctuation (end and within sentences e.g. quotation marks, commas in a series, date, city and state, apostrophes to show possession and contractions) • Correctly uses frequently confused words (e.g. homophones) • Uses paragraph structure by indenting or the student indicates a new paragraph in their editing with a paragraph symbol all of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High frequency words and phonetically regular words are correct • Use spelling patterns and generalizations (e.g. word families, syllable patterns, ending rules, meaningful word parts) in writing words. • Correctly uses frequently confused words (e.g. homophones) • Uses spelling, capitalization, punctuation and usage rules from previous grades. • Uses paragraph structure by indenting • Uses new paragraphs to change speakers in dialogue.

Editing Checklists

In addition to using rubrics to assess writing, Newtown teachers have also created editing checklists for each grade. These checklists are student-friendly and assist students as they attempt to edit their writing on their own and reflect on how well they edited independently. At the beginning of the school year, the checklists may include just a few editing skills, but as the year progresses and students learn more about their responsibilities for editing, the checklists will grow. Included in this document are samples of third and fourth grade checklists for the end-of-year editing expectations.

Newtown Public Schools

Name _____ Date _____

Third Grade Editing Checklist

I have checked my work for the following:	Yes
I have capitalized: <input type="radio"/> the first word in a sentence <input type="radio"/> proper names <input type="radio"/> dates	
I have checked my spelling and have used resources to help with unknown or difficult words.	
I have used commas in dates and with words in a series.	
I have used apostrophes appropriately to show possession and/or a contraction.	
I have checked my work for common homophone misspellings: <input type="radio"/> to, two, too <input type="radio"/> their, there, they're	
I have used spacing, indenting, or a paragraph symbol to indicate where a paragraph should start.	

Newtown Public Schools

Name _____ Date _____

Fourth Grade Editing Checklist

I have checked my work for the following:	Yes
I have capitalized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> the first word in a sentence<input type="radio"/> titles of people<input type="radio"/> proper names<input type="radio"/> the first word in dialogue<input type="radio"/> dates	
I have checked my spelling and have used resources to help with unknown or difficult words.	
I have used commas in dates and with words in a series.	
I have used apostrophes appropriately to show possession and/or a contraction.	
I have checked my work for common homophone misspellings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> to, two, too<input type="radio"/> their, there, they're<input type="radio"/> your, you're	
I have used indenting to show paragraphs or used a paragraph symbol to show where a paragraph should start.	

Newtown Public Schools

Name _____ Date _____

Fifth Grade Editing Checklist

I have checked my work for the following:	Completed
I have capitalized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> the first word in a sentence <input type="radio"/> titles of people <input type="radio"/> proper names <input type="radio"/> the first word in dialogue <input type="radio"/> dates 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I have checked my spelling and have used resources to help with unknown or difficult words.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have used commas appropriately: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> in dates <input type="radio"/> in a series <input type="radio"/> to set off interjections <input type="radio"/> in dialogue <input type="radio"/> before <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, <i>or</i> in a compound sentence <input type="radio"/> with an appositive 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I have used apostrophes appropriately to show possession and/or a contraction.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have checked my work for common homophone misspellings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> to, two, too <input type="radio"/> their, there, they're <input type="radio"/> your, you're <input type="radio"/> its, it's 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I have used indenting or spacing to show paragraphs or used a paragraph symbol to show where a paragraph should start.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have used paragraphing to change speakers in dialogue.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have checked that my sentences have appropriate subject-verb agreement.	<input type="checkbox"/>

RACER

A Tool for Improving Written Responses

Another way Newtown teachers support students, as they learn to create more detailed and more accurate written responses to what they have read, is by using the acronym RACER.

Restate the question using the stem of the question.

Answer the question.

Cite evidence from the text.

Explain or support your answer using details from the text.

Reread and wrap up your response. Add your thoughts, feelings, or opinions.

Most students will begin using RACER in second grade when they are expected to write longer, more detailed responses to their reading. In grades 7 and 8, students use the abbreviated version of this format; RACE.

Common Proofreading Symbols Used District-Wide

Newtown teachers have also been working toward creating a consistent list of proofreading symbols that all children will use throughout the grades. The symbols will be added to a grade level's expectations as they are taught.

Symbol	Description	Grade Introduced
⦿	Insert period	K
≡	Change to capital letter	K
SP	Spelling error	1
lc	Change to lower case letter	1
#	Add a space	1
^	Insert	1
∩	Insert apostrophe	1
↗	Insert comma	1
¶	Start a new paragraph	2
↵	Delete	2
S	Transpose letters or words	3
○	Close space	3
“”	Insert quotation marks	4

Supporting Writers at Home

The following are suggestions for ways parents can support their children as writers at home.

Encouraging the Writer Within

- The Basics...
 - Provide a place to write. It is important that your child have a comfortable place to write, free from distractions, with a flat surface and good lighting.
 - Have writing supplies available. Provide plenty of paper (lined and unlined), journals, and tools for writing including pencils, pens, markers, and crayons.
 - Support your child as an independent writer. Allow your child to do his/her own writing without attempting to correct too much of the work yourself.

- Make it Real
 - Your child needs to do authentic writing often. Corresponding with a penpal, writing a letter to a relative, leaving a note for you to remind you to do something in the morning, and creating a grocery list for the family are just a few examples of how your child can write for authentic purposes everyday.

- Kindergarten and first grade students collect writing in writing folders. The folder is a precursor to the notebook. Feel free to ask your child's teacher to send home the writing folder so that you may enjoy the writing that is accumulating in it. Teachers keep the pieces of writing for most of the year so that they can go back to them over time and ask students to reflect on how they are changing as writers. At times, the children may even revise a piece that was written earlier in the year.

- For students in grades 2 and up, the writer's notebook is the place to collect ideas and experiment with writing style. Ask to see the notebook often and encourage your writer to share what he/she is working on currently. Refrain from commenting on handwriting or the need for more editing at the outset. First, try focusing on the content and types of writing that are evident in the notebook. After your child learns that you are truly interested in what he/she is trying as a writer, then you might have that discussion about neatness and editing.

- Some children resist writing because it can be intimidating to compose ideas and get them down on paper in a coherent way. Add to that the challenges to spell correctly, use proper punctuation, and produce grammatically correct sentences, and some children freeze and seemingly cannot write at all. It is up to teachers and parents to encourage risk-taking with writing and to adjust our expectations for some writers until they feel safe enough as writers to expose themselves on the page. As researcher, Mina Shaughnessy once said, "Writing is but a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all that the writer doesn't know. Writing puts us on the line and we don't want to be there."

Helping Writers Generate Ideas

- Here are some suggestions to help your child generate ideas:
 - Encourage him/her to write a list of everything he/she could possibly write about and refer back to that list often. Lists are less intimidating and easier to use as a resource for writing ideas. Keep the list in the writing notebook for future use. Your child needs to know that most writers write about what they know, so it is best to start with something he/she knows about.
 - Sometimes a writing “block” can be overcome by starting a blank page and writing everything that comes to mind about a chosen topic. Writers are encouraged to spill it all out onto the page.
 - Another way to get your pencil (or keyboard) going is to write the topic in the center of a blank page and write one-word thoughts or phrases about the topic all around the center. The brainstorming ‘web’ can then be used as a planner for the first draft.
 - Use a picture/photograph to help get ideas flowing
 - Sketch a picture of an idea before writing
 - Write a letter to someone about the idea
 - Keep a family journal of events and everyday happenings to use as a reference when trying to come up with an idea

Online Resources

- Below are some great articles for parents on helping writers at home.

<http://www.greatschools.org/students/homework-help/341-tips-to-support-writing-at-home.gs>

<http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/88-six-ways-to-encourage-young-writers.gs?page=1>

<http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/LD-ADHD/806-seven-ways-to-encourage-kids-writing.gs?page=1>

The American Library Association suggests many websites for young writers.

<http://www.ala.org/gwstemplate.cfm?section=greatwebsites&template=/cfapps/gws/displaysection.cfm&sec=21>

Other resources for parents:

www.scholastic.com/parents

<http://www.sde.ct.gov> click on ‘Parents and Community’

Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

CCSS: Connecticut Common Core State Standards adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010. These new national academic standards in English language arts and mathematics establish what Connecticut’s public school students should know and be able to do as they progress through grades K-12. As of 2012, a total of 46 states had adopted the Common Core Standards.

Conventional spelling: having to do with words that are spelled correctly.

Domain-specific words and phrases: vocabulary specific to a particular field of study.

Discipline-specific vocabulary: words specific to a particular content area studied (science, social studies, math, etc.)

Editing: part of the writing process that involves fixing the spelling, grammar, and other mechanics of a piece of writing.

Explanatory Writing: a piece of writing that serves to explain and/or inform the reader.

Genre: A type or category of writing having a particular form, content, or technique, such as; poetry, narrative, informational, etc.

Memoir: an account of one’s personal life and experiences with a particular significance.

MLA format: (Modern Language Association) a standard format for documenting sources and references in research papers.

Personal Narrative: an account of an event or experience in one’s life.

Revising: part of writing and that involves primarily reworking a piece of writing to aid in clarity, organization, and elaboration.

Transitional words and phrases: words and phrases that help the reader to flow more smoothly from one point in a piece of writing to another. Some transitional words and phrases are: however, consequently, on the other hand, later, etc.

Bibliography

To learn more about the writing process and standards mentioned in this document, we recommend the following texts.

For seminal texts on the writing process and teaching writing:

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. 1994. *The Art of Teaching Writing*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Fletcher, Ralph. 1996. *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer within You*. New York, N.Y.: Avon Books.

Graham, Steve and Charles A. MacArthur. 2007. *Best Practices in Writing Instruction*. New York, N.Y.: Guilford Press.

Nagin, Carl and the National Writing Project. 2006. *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in our Schools*. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.

For information on the Common Core Standards:

See the Connecticut State Department of Education website, www.sde.ct.gov, click on Common Core Standards.

Also, visit www.commonstandards.org for more information on the national initiative toward common standards.