**Level One**

**General Guidelines for Level One Writing:**

The narrative is a representational series of drawings with oral commentary and perhaps approximated letters.

To achieve this level, the student must meet the following criteria in each of the following categories:

**Structure: Subject and Focus**

The child’s drawing(s) may be nonrepresentational. The drawings do not appear to be connected to each other, and they may not depict an event.

The child provides oral comments about the drawings, but these comments are not yet organized chronologically.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

*Scenes:* No scenes from the child’s story are depicted in the drawing or the text.

*Organization of Detail*: No organization is apparent.

*Characters:* The drawings are a series of nonrepresentational marks; therefore there is no sense of character.

*Setting:* The setting is probably nonexistent.

**Concept of Writing/Craft**

The child believes that the drawings carry meaning because when asked to do so, the child “reads” the text, telling about items in the drawing(s).

Even when asked to “write the word,” the child may not yet produce approximated letter strings or different attempts at written words.

**Meaning/Significance**

A meaning, or a specific content is probably not apparent; meaning is determined each time the student “reads” the text, and this meaning may change each time it is “read.”

**Conventions**

Do not take into account the following conventions of writing as criteria in achieving this level.

* Capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
* Letter formation

**Level Two**

**General Guidelines for Level Two Writing:**

The narrative is a collection of representational drawings related to a single topic or event with an accompanying attempt toward writing**.**

To achieve this level, the student must meet the following criteria in each of the following categories:

**Structure: Subject and Focus**

The child makes a collection of drawings accompanied by attempts at writing. The drawings are related to a single topic or event of choice.

The writer provides oral commentary about the collection of drawings and (possible) pages of text.

The text is more apt to tell all about the topic rather than convey a step-by-step progression i.e. small moment.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

*Scenes:* The drawings are of a character and possibly an object.

*Organization of Detail*: Each drawing is “read” as if it were a sentence. Each time the story is told, more detail may be added to the drawing and the retelling of the story, i.e. telling the story across the hand.

*Characters:* The drawing generally involves a character or two (a person or an animal), and sometimes an object (a car, a house, a tree). Often the drawings of characters’ faces show emotions. The oral ‘story’ that accompanies the drawing is probably a summary vs. a small moment. Writing does not include dialogue or character thoughts.

*Setting:* The writer’s drawings may simply convey a specific setting (such as including a sun), and/or the writer may mention a setting (“I went to the park.”) when telling the story.

**Concept of Writing/Craft**

The text will include at least approximated written words: labels on the drawings and/or letter strings at the bottoms of pages indicating that the child recognizes words are different than drawing. The child realizes that letters carry meaning because he/she “reads” the words, not just talk about the drawings. The child may have no sense of directionality (reading left to right).

**Meaning/Significance**

The child is beginning to understand that written texts/drawings convey meaning; once the topic is determined, the child draws and writes to capture the topic on the page.

**Conventions**

Do not take into account the following conventions of writing as criteria in achieving this level.

* Capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
* Letter formation

**Level Three**

**General Guidelines for Level Three Writing:**

The narrative is a sparse, sequential written account of an event told primarily through drawing with perhaps one accompanying sentence per drawing.

To achieve this level, the student must meet the following criteria in each of the following categories:

**Structure and Focus**

The student draws a sequence of drawings and writes a brief sequential chronicle of how the character progressed through the events.

The student focuses on a small moment/event with a beginning, middle and end.

Each step of the narrative continues to be elaborated.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

*Scenes:* The student tells a sequence of action by relaying what happened first, next, next... finally.

*Organization of Detail:* Each action is apt to be told in one to two sentences. The writer elaborates through details added to the drawing or storytelling. With prompting, the writer will add these details.

*Characters:* Dialogue is not in direct quotes, but may be present. Speech bubbles might be added. The talk usually only conveys what is happening or being said.

*Setting:* The setting may be included in the story but is not apt to be developed.

**Concept of Writing/Craft**

The written portion of this text shows a grasp of directionality (left to right) and a sense of word. The child can point to words as he/she reads.

The writer displays a sense of purpose for writing; he/she recognized the piece could be expanded upon or revised, and shared with others.

**Meaning/Significance**

The writer understands how writing and drawings can give meaning to his/her life experiences.

**Conventions**

Do not take into account the following conventions of writing as criteria in achieving this level.

* Capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
* Letter formation

If the student does not meet grade level expectation for conventions and mechanics, please indicate this by adding a minus sign to the leveled score. (3-)**Level Four**

**General Guidelines for Level Four Writing:**

The narrative is a sequential written account that is focused by time, and includes elaboration.

To achieve this level, the student must have met the following criteria in each of the categories:

**Structure and Focus**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer draws or writes a story in which the main character progresses through a chronological sequence of events.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The text is focused on a small moment/event over a small period of time (an experience lasting

no more than 20 minutes in his/her life.)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer begins to demonstrate the need for a strong ending to the piece.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Scenes:* The writer either develops more precise steps through an event or elaborates on each step.

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Organization of Detail:* The piece is more detailed than earlier levels, and each action step may be told in several sentences.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Writer conveys not only actions but also response to those actions i.e. feeling or thoughts.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Characters:* Drawings may convey details of characters, but not yet in the written text. The writer now includes some specifics about what the characters say, think, and feel, though what the characters say is still apt to be summarized by the narrator or in speech bubbles (rather than written dialogue).

**Concept of Writing/Craft**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The written portion of the text shows a grasp of directionality (left to right) and a sense of word.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Words have most letters and spacing between words.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Distinguishing features may include an attempt to tell the story or entertain the reader through the use of sound effects or ending punctuation such as an exclamation point or question mark.

**Meaning/ Significance**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Even though he/she may write with excitement or feeling, the writer has chosen to write about a focused small moment/event that is apt to be an ordinary, everyday moment.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer will probably include the narrator’s response to the event. This may be throughout the text or especially at the end of the text. “I cried and cried.”

**Conventions**

The writer demonstrates command of capitalization and ending punctuation. First words of a sentence, date, proper nouns, and “I” are capitalized.

If the student does not demonstrate command of capitalization and punctuation but meets other criteria, do not lower the students’ score; however, if the student does not meet grade level expectation for conventions and mechanics, please indicate this by adding a minus sign to the leveled score. (4-)

**Level Five**

**General Guidelines for Level Five Writing:**

The narrative is a developed account of a focused event possibly illustrated with pictures and told through short paragraphs.

To achieve this level, the student must meet the following criteria in each of the following categories:

**Structure and Focus**

The writer tells the story of a chronological sequence of a small moment/event.

The focus is on a small moment/event occurring over a short period of time (an experience lasting

no more than 20 minutes in his/her life).

Each step of the narrative continues to be elaborated.

A basic understanding of narrative structure is apparent: the initial action by main character is followed by chronologically related actions. These actions demonstrate a sense of build-up, but many un-related details are still present.

A sense of ending is apparent.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

*Scenes:* Several sentences depict most of the steps in a sequence of activities or very small steps are described through detailed sequence of events. The text may include many unnecessary details that may be eliminated without interfering with meaning.

*Organization of Detail:* The narrative contains much more detail than earlier leveled pieces. Much of the detail may seem to a critical reader to be unessential to the story. It is as if the writer recorded everything he/she remembered or imagined without weighing the contribution the details might make to the whole and without consideration for the intended effect of the small moment/event.

*Characters:* Character actions are told in a step-by-step list with accompanying dialogue. Some dialogue shows rather than tells. (“I hugged Mom and said thanks.”)

*Setting:* The setting, if present, is developed in one place and is usually one sentence. (“One sunny day…”)

**Concept of Writing/Craft**

The piece reads mostly like an oral account.

The story may include direct quotations.

Descriptive words or sound effects **may be** (but are not required) included in isolated sections, indicating the author tried to write well.

**Meaning/Significance**

The writing about the moment/event suggests the author experienced excitement or emotion.

The writer will probably respond to the event, especially at the end. “I cried and cried.”

**Conventions**

The writer demonstrates command of the conventions of capitalization and punctuation. First

words of a sentence, dates, proper nouns, holidays, geographic names, and “I” are capitalized.

Ending punctuation is used.

If the student does not demonstrate command of the conventions outlined above but meets other criteria, do not lower the students’ score; however, if the student does not meet grade level expectation for conventions and mechanics, please indicate this by adding a minus sign to the leveled score. (4-)

**Level Six**

**General Guidelines for Level Six Writing:**

The internal story (the narrator’s or character’s thoughts and feelings) is interwoven into the sequence of actions, giving this focused account new cohesiveness.

To achieve this level, the student must meet the following criteria in each of the following categories:

**Structure**

The writer tells the story of a chronological sequence of a small moment/event over a small period of time (an experience lasting no more than 20 minutes in his/her life.)

The writer supplies the main character’s (or narrator’s) motivation/internal story explaining a reason

for or a response to an action.

Too many related or unrelated details swamp the story–structure. This may also mean the writer doesn’t end the story at a place that relates to the real heart/message of the story but instead tells more (and more).

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

*Scenes:* Writer writes several sentences about most of the steps in the sequence of actions, or the writer progresses slowly through the sequence of events, so a timeline of the text would include approximately 8 steps. The writer tried to “make a movie in his/her mind” but the result is mainly a chronicle of actions.

*Organization of Details:* At this stage, the writer aims to tell not only *what* happened but also to show *how* it happened. (“I was scared.” “My heart was beating wildly.”) In the effort to show and not tell, the text can be overwhelmed with dialogue.

*Characters:* Dialogue (and sometimes internal thoughts) elaborates the important aspects of the story. The writer will tell what the central character (or the narrator) said or did in such a way as to show the person’s feelings. There may be so much dialogue that it is ineffective.

*Setting:* The writer may have included a few, very specific details that help readers visualize portions of the story.

**Concept of Writing/Craft**

Writer focuses on one element that the writing becomes tedious (for example, too much detail or dialogue).

The writer aims not only to ‘tell what happened’ but also to write “a good story.” This intention may mean that, in addition to including direct quotations, sound effects, and/or a few descriptive words, the writer may use some story language, a few literary words or some descriptive clauses. Usually, the result is a bit awkward or at least uneven; the writer doesn’t yet know how to weave elements effectively.

These texts are apt to jump ‘right in the story’ with a character saying something or engaged in detailed action.

**Meaning/Significance**

For the most part, the writer tells a sequence of events which he or she believes has some significance, and then simply expects readers (on their own) to grasp the significance of the moment (a lack of audience awareness).

**Conventions**

The writer demonstrates command of capitalization, punctuation and paragraphing. First words of

a sentence, dates, proper nouns, holidays, geographic names, and “I” are capitalized. Possessives

are indicated. Appropriate ending punctuation is used.

If the student does not demonstrate command of the conventions outlined above but meets other criteria, do not lower the students’ score; however, if the student does not meet grade level expectation for conventions and mechanics, please indicate this by adding a minus sign to the leveled score. (6-)

**Level Seven**

**General Guidelines for Level Seven Writing:**

The narrative begins to show (not tells) a sequence of events – as a result the plot, rising action, tension, and climax unfold so readers experience the evolving drama (connected small moments) rather than simply hear an account of what the character or narrator did (summary). The piece is focused and cohesive.

**Structure**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer conveys a chronological sequence of micro-events (and responses to events).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer writes about a focused small moment/event.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The story unfolds in a step-by-step fashion.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer begins to use a traditional problem/solution structure in the piece.

­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer uses some sense of elements of the plot and of resolution.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Scenes:* The characters act and interact on the page. Each step of the story is told with a sentence or

two; the story is no longer a summary.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer seems to have ‘made a movie in his or her mind,’ envisioning the story.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Organization of Detail:* Narrative has too many details that do not embellish the main idea, enhance the message, or work in alignment with the story’s mood.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Characters:* The writer shows not only what the character *did* and *said*, but also what the character *thought* and *felt*. The writer uses dialogue to show what the character/narrator is feeling; this helps establish the cause and effect of the events. Often, only the main character is developed.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Setting:* The writer begins to develop the setting so that readers do not simply know where the characters are (a pool), but can see some of the details of where they are (in a deep pool).

**Concept of Writing/Craft**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ As in texts written at level 6, these texts are apt to start in ‘right in the story’ with a character saying

something or engaged in detailed action. Story tension may build in the appropriate section of the

plot.

Writer has improved use of detail, description, and dialogue, and the overall craft is more

sophisticated, and not overdone. Purposeful crafting of the story is not fully understood by the

writer. The topic and details lend themselves to be developed into a strong drama, but the story is

not fully developed.

Writer attempts to step back to give a sense of setting and action.

**Meaning/Significance**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer shows that the event (small moment) was exciting, sad, proud or scary for the main

character (or the narrator). Meaning is established by showing, not telling.

**Conventions**

The writer demonstrates command of the conventions of capitalization, punctuation and paragraphing. First words of a sentence, dates, proper nouns, holidays, geographic names, and “I” are capitalized. Possessives are indicated. Appropriate ending punctuation is used.

The writer uses commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotes from the text.

If the student does not demonstrate command of the conventions outlined above but meets other criteria, do not lower the students’ score; however, if the student does not meet grade level expectation for conventions and mechanics, please indicate this by adding a minus sign to the leveled score. (7-) **Level Eight**

**General Guidelines for Level Eight Writing:**

The narrative shows (not tells) a sequence of events in a more developed way than level 7; the plot unfolds so readers experience the evolving drama (connected small moments) rather than simply hear an account of what the character or narrator did (summary). The piece is focused and cohesive, but still lacks coherence and significance of level 9.

**Structure**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer conveys a chronological sequence of micro-events (and responses to events).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Writer writes about a focused small moment event.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The story unfolds in a step-by-step fashion, but the text may deviate from chronology to develop flashback or foreshadowing.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer follows a traditional story structure: narrator meets difficulty, finds resolution or learns from experience.

­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Writer consciously structures the event so as to bring bigger meaning to smaller event.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Scenes:* The writer has stretched out the part he or she deems most important, writing this section

with more elaboration and probably progressing in smaller steps (more detail and explanation) through this section of the sequence. That is, every section of the story is not developed equally.

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Organization of Details:* The writer develops and elaborates on parts he/she feels are most important. The writer successfully braids a variety of detail, creating a balance of dialogue, setting, actions, and internal thought.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Characters:* The characters act and interact on the page, creating distinct characters even though they may be stereotypes.

The character’s internal story is more developed through beginning, middle, end, and through feelings that progress throughout the story.

*Setting:* Setting is described through a character interaction with the surroundings. For example, in the “Goosebumps” anchor paper, the main character wonders why her mother wanted her to wear fleece on a warm summer night in Montana.

**Craft**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Rising action is developed through tension revealed through the characters’ feelings, motivations and reactions. Time continues to be a step-by-step progression.

Text contains a balance of dialogue, precise actions, settings, and thought; sensory details or figurative language creates a sense of place and mood that is not fully developed.

**Meaning/Significance**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_While the small moment has been made interesting, a sense of larger significance such as teaching a lesson, conveying an insight, or exploring a big idea is not fully developed.

**Conventions**

The writer demonstrates command of the conventions of capitalization and punctuation. First words of a sentence, dates, proper nouns, holidays, geographic names, and “I” are capitalized.

Possessives are indicated. Appropriate ending punctuation is used.

The writer uses commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotes from the text. Commas are used to separate items in a series.

If the student does not demonstrate command of the conventions outlined above but meets other criteria, do not lower the students’ score; however, if the student does not meet grade level expectation for conventions and mechanics, please indicate this by adding a minus sign to the leveled score.

**Level Nine**

**General Guidelines for Level Nine Writing:**

The narrative is a cohesive, coherent story which sets up and resolves a problem, and begins to convey not only a feeling but an idea or a message.

**Structure**

Building upon the characteristics of level 8 structure:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The story is centered on a single episode and includes a prelude or follow-up action or reflection.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The story sets up and resolves a problem or tension.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_The writer may have attempted flashback or foreshadowing.

**Elaboration/Show Don’t Tell**

­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*Scenes:* The writer represents the episode in a way which allows the reader to have his or her own

experience while reading the text.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Organization of Details:* Greater variety of details show characters’ feelings and emotion; details are not

distracting. The writer develops and elaborates on parts he/she feels are most important. The writer

uses a variety of detail, creating a successful balance of dialogue, setting, actions, and internal thought.

\_\_\_\_\_\_Details reveal the writer’s interpretation of the event; unimportant details are deleted.

\_\_**\_\_\_\_\_***Characters:* The story reveals what the characters do and think, and also what they remember, feel, wonder, notice, etc. The story focuses less on what they did and integrates feeling and action.

The characters are more differentiated from each other.

*Setting:* The writer interacts with the setting throughout the entire narrative. For example, in every paragraph of the anchor paper “Bubble Gum,” the writer mentions the setting in every paragraph.

**Craft**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time will mostly move forward evenly, but probably there will be gaps, i.e. “a little later.”

Rising action is developed through tension revealed through the characters’ feelings, motivations and reaction; reader is drawn into drama that the main character is experiencing.

Text contains a balance of dialogue, precise actions, settings, and thought; sensory details or figurative language create a sense of place and the mood creates a more sophisticated display of what the main character is thinking and feeling.

Writer includes more sensory details, figurative language, and dialogue.

**Meaning/Significance**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The writer’s feelings about the event are evident. Strong lead and strong ending support the heart of

the story and make a clear point.

**Conventions**

The writer demonstrates command of the conventions of capitalization and punctuation. First words of

a sentence, dates, proper nouns, holidays, geographic names, and “I” are capitalized. Possessives are indicated. Appropriate ending punctuation is used.

The writer uses commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotes from the text.

Commas are used to separate items in a series.

Verb tense conveys time and sequence, and is consistent throughout the story.

Grade-appropriate words are spelled correctly.

If the student does not demonstrate command of the conventions outlined above but meets other criteria, do not

lower the students’ score; however, if the student does not meet grade level expectation for conventions and

mechanics, please indicate this by adding a minus sign to the leveled score. (9-)