



Purposeful Writing Assessment: Using Multiple-Choice Practice to Inform Writing Instruction

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Purposeful Writing Assessment provides teachers of developing writers in grades 3-8 with both comprehensive and targeted multiple-choice assessments specific to expository and narrative writing genres. The assessments are designed to be used as diagnostic tools, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction and monitor progress.

In the current climate of accountability, it's easy to overlook the function of assessment to inform instruction. Each assessment in this book is followed by a list of re-teaching strategies designed to address specific areas of challenge. After re-teaching, an alternate form of the assessment allows the teacher to check student progress. *Purposeful Writing Assessment* can help you ensure success for all young writers.

About the Study Guide

This guide is designed to facilitate professional development in a collegial book study atmosphere. Five professional development sessions include discussion points, guiding questions, workshop activities, and classroom applications. To create a successful professional development experience, consider the following tips:

- Before you begin, seek input about teacher schedules and preferences. Try to arrange your professional development so that participants will be able to attend every session.
- Provide copies of *Purposeful Writing Assessment* for all participants. Teachers will need access to the assessments, re-teaching strategies, and resources between sessions.
- Provide discussion questions ahead of time and encourage participants to become familiar with each chapter prior to your meeting.
- At each meeting, allow for discussion before beginning the planned workshop activities. Teachers will gain understanding by articulating their successes and challenges in using assessment to inform instruction.

Session One

Getting Started: Introduction and Appendix A

Guiding Quote:

“When used as a diagnostic tool, assessments produce much more than a number that can be applied to assess how well a student is functioning. They provide a window into a student’s patterns of thinking and processing information.” (p. vii)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the three major areas of writing addressed in the assessments?
2. What is the purpose of having alternate forms (Form A and Form B) of each assessment?
3. Where are the Comprehensive Assessments found?

Workshop Activity:

1. Divide participants into three groups. Have each group read and discuss one of the three areas of writing addressed in the assessments: focus and organization, style and composition, conventions and mechanics. Direct participants to turn to the Bibliography of Professional Books beginning on page 140 and identify resources pertaining to the skills covered in their area.
2. Allow each group to present a brief description of the types of skills covered in their area, along with corresponding resources.
3. Have participants work in small groups to survey and discuss the Comprehensive Assessments and corresponding answering keys found in Appendix A, beginning on page 116.
4. Ask teachers to predict the strengths and challenges they will find among their students after administering comprehensive assessment.

Classroom Implementation:

Administer Comprehensive Assessment A to students. Score assessments and identify areas of strength and challenge.

Looking Ahead:

Be prepared to discuss the areas of strength and challenge identified by the results of Comprehensive Assessment A.

Session Two

Chapter One: Organization and Focus

Guiding Quote:

“Weak organizational skills stand out immediately to a reader. Stories that are difficult to follow, pieces that leave the reader without a clear sense of focus or resolution and expository pieces that lack adequate support are all signs of deficient organizational skills.” (p. 1)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the four parts of organization addressed?
2. What is the difference between narrative and expository organization?
3. What should the teacher do after administering a Form A assessment?

Workshop Activity:

1. Divide participants into five groups and assign each of the five sections of assessments to a group. Each group should read and discuss their assigned assessment and re-teaching strategies.
2. Have each group report on their assessment, its purpose, and a possible re-teaching strategy they might employ.
3. Direct participants to select at least one assessment to administer to students. Encourage participants to target a specific area of weakness identified by the comprehensive assessment.

Classroom Implementation:

Administer the selected focus and organization assessment to students. Score assessments and identify areas of strength and challenge. Employ selected re-teaching strategies and re-test using Form B of the selected focus and organization assessment.

Looking Ahead:

Be prepared to discuss the process of administering a Form A assessment, employing a targeted re-teaching strategy, and re-testing using Form B of the same assessment.

Session Three

Chapter Two: Style and Composition

Guiding Quote:

“Written pieces that lack style and composition skills are flat and uninteresting to the reader. These pieces offer information devoid of visual description and relevant details.” (p. 43)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the three main groups of style and composition skills addressed in the assessments?
2. What are some specific writing-craft skills within each of these groups?

Workshop Activity:

1. Divide participants into six groups and assign each of the six sections of assessments to a group. Each group should read and discuss their assigned assessment and re-teaching strategies.
2. Have each group report on their assessment, its purpose, and a possible re-teaching strategy they might employ.
3. Direct participants to select at least one assessment to administer to students. Encourage participants to target a specific area of weakness identified by the comprehensive assessment.

Classroom Implementation:

Administer the selected style and composition assessment to students. Score assessments and identify areas of strength and challenge. Employ selected re-teaching strategies and re-test using Form B of the selected style and composition assessment.

Looking Ahead:

Be prepared to discuss the effectiveness of re-teaching strategies employed and the helpfulness of any resources or literature models used to reinforce skills.

Session Four

Chapter Three: Conventions and Mechanics

Guiding Quote:

“Faulty application of language conventions distracts the reader. Good organization, strong vocabulary and well-crafted elements of style all lose their credibility when there are errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and usage.” (p. 89)

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the four areas of language conventions addressed in these assessments?
2. What is a helpful strategy to students to practice when proofreading their work?

Workshop Activity:

1. Divide participants into four groups and assign each of the four sections of assessments to a group. Each group should read and discuss their assigned assessment and re-teaching strategies.
2. Have each group report on their assessment, its purpose, and a possible re-teaching strategy they might employ.
3. Direct participants to select at least one assessment to administer to students. Encourage participants to target a specific area of weakness identified by the comprehensive assessment.

Classroom Implementation:

Administer the selected conventions and mechanics assessment to students. Score assessments and identify areas of strength and challenge. Employ selected re-teaching strategies and re-test using Form B of the selected style and composition assessment.

Looking Ahead:

Be prepared to discuss the identified strengths and weaknesses of students and the effectiveness of re-teaching strategies employed.

Session Five

Putting It All Together

Guiding Quote:

“You must be sure to carry these skills to the next level by modeling their use in literary works and providing ample practice for students to create lively, engaging text.” (p. x)

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you use the data gathered from these assessments to plan for instruction?
2. How can these assessments lead to improved student writing?

Workshop Activity:

1. Have participants turn to Appendix B, beginning on page 137. Discuss the use of this tool in tracking the progress of students.
2. Divide participants into pairs or small groups to review the index of literature models beginning on page 143. Participants should identify literature models that can be used to demonstrate writing skills identified as areas of challenge.
3. Review the bibliography of resources beginning on page 140. Identify resources owned by faculty members or available in your school's professional library.

Classroom Implementation:

Plan for further assessment, progress monitoring, and re-teaching. When all skills have been taught, use Comprehensive Assessment Form B to evaluate mastery.

Looking Ahead:

Identify desired resources and literature models that are not available at your site and explore funding sources you can use to acquire these resources and literature models.