

District Writing Assessment

General Information Bulletin 2015-2016

Nipisihkopahk Education Authority

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Introduction

This document is designed to be an instruction manual for the administration of the District Writing Assessment. The hope is that you find all of the information you need to successfully administer it in your schools and classrooms this year. If you do not find what you're looking for, or have additional feedback about the assessment itself and ways that it could be improved, please contact Ryan Anderson at ryananderson@scnea.com.

Schedules and Significant Dates

Administration Window

Like the Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) that are administered by Alberta Education, the District Writing Assessment will be administered within an administration window instead of a single date. That means teachers can administer the assessment over the span of a few days, or on a day that works best for their students.

The administration window is as follows:

Administration Window – Monday May 16th – Friday May 27th

Because teachers have the flexibility to administer the assessment at any time during this window, they also have the ability to administer the assessment in segments. This decision can be made by teachers if they feel that their students would benefit from segmenting the test versus completing it in one single sitting. That decision is left to the professional judgment of the classroom teacher. However, ***all students in their classes have to have completed the assessment by the end of the administration window.***

Marking Dates

Marking of the DWA will be site-based this year. Marking sessions will be held at each of the schools on Wednesday afternoons. The schedule is as follows:

1. May 25 – MSS*
2. June 1 – NPS
3. June 8 – NES
4. June 15 – NSS

* Please note that the marking session at MSS is scheduled to take place before the end of the Administration Window. This will require teachers at that school to ensure their students have completed the assessment by the aforementioned date.

All materials that will be needed for the marking session (such as scoring guides and exemplar booklets) will be provided to teachers on that day. ***Teachers are only required to bring a pen/pencil*** with which they will mark student samples.

Test Accommodations

Because this is a locally developed and administered assessment, we can make whatever accommodations necessary for our students. When it comes to accommodations for this particular assessment, individual ***teachers will have the autonomy to make accommodations for students based on their IPPs***. If students require certain accommodations, such as a reader or scribe, outlined specifically in their IPP, then such an accommodation can be made for this assessment as well.

If students will be given accommodations for the assessment, ***teachers are required to fill out the accommodations section included in each of the individual tests***. It identifies what the accommodation is, and who the adult was that provided the accommodation.

If a student is exempted from writing the PAT, which is a similar type of an assessment, based on the recommendation made by the superintendent or a psychologist, then the student would be exempted from this assessment as well. All other students, however, will write this assessment so that we can determine where our students are at in terms of their writing and what we could do to best help them in their future learning.

With regards to making accommodations for students, teachers are encouraged to make arrangements with other teachers at the school and/or EAs if adults are needed for student accommodations. This should be manageable due to the fact that there is a two-week administration window instead of a single test administration date.

Test Rules

The following are the general rules for test administration.

Type of Assessment

Remember, ***the District Writing Assessment is a first draft writing exercise***. This means that students produce one copy of their work for assessment. First draft writing does not allow for the completion of rough and good drafts.

Printing of Materials

Given the photocopying limitations experienced by teachers, ***all testing booklets will be printed and delivered to the schools*** for distribution. Teachers do not have to download and print the test booklets for their students. Booklets will be generated according to class lists in Power School.

Use of Visuals/Smart Board

Teachers are permitted to put the image/illustration on the Smart Board so that their students can better see the image/illustration in order to write their narrative story.

Discussion and Planning

Teachers are encouraged to engage their students in discussion and planning as outlined in the instructions for the assessment; however, ***teachers are not to do the planning for the students***. Inasmuch as teachers are to facilitate the discussion and planning, the ideas and the work of planning should come from the students.

The following is a breakdown of the appropriate amount of teacher directed discussion and planning for the DWA:

Teacher Directed Discussion 20 minutes + Teacher Directed Planning 20 minutes = 40 total minutes of prewriting activities

Segmenting of Time within the Administration Window

As previously mentioned, if teachers feel that their students would benefit by segmenting discussion, planning, and writing times, it is permitted under the test rules for the administration of the District Writing Assessment; however, this decision should be made only for the benefit of the student(s). This also allows for the individualization of a test administration for the benefit of students who would not be able to complete the assessment within the same parameters as the rest of their classmates. Caution and planning, however, should be taken into account when considering how such time adjustments will be made.

Technology and Other Resources

Teachers can choose to have their students write by hand or by computer. They can even have some of their students write by hand while having others write using the computer. It is at the discretion of the teacher; however, should the teacher choose to have students complete the assessment using a word processor ***all autocorrect functions need to be deactivated for the writing of the assessment***.

Students are permitted to have access to a dictionary and thesaurus during the administration of the assessment. This includes any personal dictionaries that students may have created under the direction of their teachers over the course of the year, such as word wall dictionaries, etc.

Securing and Delivering of the District Writing Assessment

It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that these assessments are kept in a secure place until all students have completed the assessment during the administration window.

Once all students in the class have completed the assessment, ***teachers are to submit them to their principals for safekeeping.***

All assessments need to be completed and delivered to principals no later than the end of the school day on Friday May 27th.

Optional Assessment for Class-based Reporting Purposes

Teachers can choose to use the scoring guides and make this an assignment or assessment for reporting purposes; however, this is not mandatory. The scoring guides will eventually be used for teachers to engage in a grade level marking sessions where they can determine how students did in relation to the scoring guides/standards and what students should be able to do based on the program of studies for each of the respective grades.

Please note that these are not secured documents, and can be copied and placed in students' writing portfolios if that is something that is being done in the classroom or school. Copies can also be kept if a teacher would like to use the district writing assessment for further discussion, instruction, and learning with students.

NOTE: Last year, many teachers used the DWA as an assessment for reporting purposes on the last report card for the year. Should teachers choose to do that this year, they are to make their own copies of students' work individual marking and reporting purposes. All original assessments are to be handed in to the principal for district assessment and record keeping purposes.

Test Results

We have made customizations to Dossier, allowing NEA to report on individual and aggregate data related to the District Writing Assessment. Existing DWA data is already available on Dossier, and this year's data will be uploaded once the marking sessions are complete. It is anticipated that this data will be available for teachers upon their return from summer holidays, prior to the start of the 2016-2017 school year.

NOTE: Training and demonstrations will be made available for teachers to be able to access and utilize this data to inform their practices as they work with their new students and classes in the coming school year.

Adding Assessment to the Cumulative Files

Mr. Anderson keeps all student samples of the assessment on file. Should principals require that DWA samples be added to individual student cumulative files, teachers will need to make arrangements with their principals to make the

necessary photocopies prior to the submission of all student samples at the end of the Administration Window on Friday May 27th.

NOTE: Once student assessment booklets have been submitted to Mr. Anderson for processing and filing, they will no longer be available to teachers for photocopying purposes.