

**Sky Mountain Charter School
2010-2011
School Wide Writing Assignment
Directions for Parents and ESs**

DIRECTIONS FOR PARENTS

Writing Assignment

Each year the school focuses on a different type (genre) of writing. Parents will be given writing prompts for all students in grades 1-12. The assignment is optional for kindergarten, however kindergarten prompts and support materials are included and we encourage our families to use these as writing practice. The prompts, directions, practice prompts, scoring rubrics and other helpful documents are also available on the Sky Mountain Charter School website under Curriculum, then Writing Assignments.

http://skymountaincs.org/handbook/Curriculum/writing_assignments.html

Our school goal is to improve everyone's writing skills through this process, provide support to our parents in this important area in their student's education, and remove the fear and mystery for our students around their STAR and CAHSEE ELA assessments, as well as prepare our students for various college admission essays. The writing assignment is designed to be a positive experience for the student by building on their writing strengths.

The Writing Assignment Timeline and Deadlines

Prior to the first Learning Record Meeting: ESs give parents the link to this year's writing assignments. Parents, please do not show the student the actual prompts until the time of the writing assessments. The first writing sample is due at the next Learning Record meeting. There are practice prompts and many helpful links for parents. We encourage parents to take advantage of these resources in preparing their child for the writing assignment. For example, the parent may want to go over the available lessons and outlines and work with their child on one or more of the practice prompts prior to completing the assignment that will be turned in. Parents should look at the scoring rubrics for their child's grade level. All of these resources are available at the link above.

October, (Second Learning Record Meeting): The ES will collect the writing sample and provide feedback to the student at the second Learning Record meeting. The scored samples should be used to facilitate a productive educational session. The ES will copy the writing sample and the scoring rubric. The scored writing sample will be returned to the parent/student at the November Learning Record Meeting. The ES will keep a copy in their students' files. ESs will contact their advisor if concerns arise.

November, (Third Learning Record Meeting): The ES will return the scored samples. The second writing sample is to be a revision of the first writing sample. The student should use the feedback provided by the ES and incorporate that feedback in writing a revision of the first writing sample.

January, (Fourth Learning Record Meeting): The second writing assignment, the revision, is due at the January Learning Record meeting. This is an opportunity for the ES to provide the student with feedback at this Learning Record meeting on the writing assignment prior to the administration of the California High School Exit Exam (February 1, 2011), and the 4th and 7th grade STAR Writing Test (March 1, 2011). The second writing samples will be evaluated at the Learning Record meeting and returned scored the following month.

March - Return second scored writing sample to the students. The scored samples should be used to facilitate a productive educational session. ES will keep a copy in their students' files. No later than **March 1st** - ESs email their advisor stating that they have received and scored both writing samples for all their students. ES enters the students' scores in FRED.

Students enrolling later in the school year will still need to complete the writing assignments. The assignments will be given upon enrollment. The first assignment will be due at that student's 2nd learning record meeting and returned at the third learning record meeting. The revision will be due at the fourth learning record meeting and returned at the fifth learning record meeting.

Specific Directions for Writing the Student Writing Sample

- The parent will not share the writing prompt to the student prior to administering the writing assessment. This is on the honor system. Practice prompts are available on the website.

http://skymountaincs.org/handbook/Curriculum/writing_assignments.html

- The ES is not required to be present while the student completes the writing assignment.
- The student may not refer to or use a checklist, spellcheck/dictionary during their writing session.
- The student must handwrite the writing sample, as typing is not accepted.
- If the student is unable to physically write, he/she may dictate their response orally to the parent who is to write the student's exact words (or draw a picture and label it, if age appropriate). The parent needs to ask the spelling of words that they think the student does not know how to spell, then spell them as dictated. Any other exceptions must be approved by the ES Advisor or the school's director(s).
- Parents may choose a comparable writing assignment prompt of like genre and rigor for that school year if they have a strong objection to the school-provided assignment prompt. The prompt must be pre-approved by their ES and a copy of the prompt must be provided to their ES.
 - Students are to do their writing assignment in one sitting. During that sitting, the student will want to implement the writing process to help them produce their best work: analyze the prompt, plan using memorized outlines or graphic organizers, proofread, and edit their writing sample.
- This is a school-required writing assignment that must be collected. ESs are to be certain they have clearly explained the purpose and goal of this assignment as previously explained.

- It is recommended that students write in pencil and double-space their writing sample so they have the room for necessary revision and editing notations.
- The student's writing samples will be scored using the school-wide writing assignment rubric. The student's sample will be scored according to the rubric categories to include: how well the writing stays on topic; includes sentence variety and appropriate paragraph structure; has correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling; and how well ideas are supported with appropriate use of details.

DIRECTIONS FOR ESs ONLY

ESs must be sure that the parents understand where to find the supporting documents and links for the writing assignments. This should be communicated to the parent during the first week of school, or the first week of the student's enrollment.

Preparation for Scoring:

ESs will collect the writing samples and the prompt at the October and January Learning Record meetings. Each ES will print out a copy of the rubric. A copy of the rubric is included in this packet, and is posted on our website under Curriculum. The ES will attach the rubric and to the student's writing assignment samples, and keep one copy in their students' files.

Directions for Scoring:

Use the scoring rubric found in this handout and on the website. There are five categories each worth between 1-4 points. For example, if a student scores a 4 in each category they would earn 20 points, or an average of 4 pts. The score should be averaged, so if a student totals 15 points the average would be 3 points (15 divided by 5 areas = 3). ESs enter scores in FRED under VIEW < TESTING < STAR<Writing. For example, if the student's first score is a 3, and the second is a 4 please enter the score in FRED as 3/4.

Scoring Feedback:

The ES will provide the student and parent with curriculum ideas and links to writing sites. These links are also posted on the Sky Mountain Charter School website under Curriculum < 2011 School Wide Writing assignment.

1. One copy of each writing assessment is to be kept in the ES's student file to follow the student while they are enrolled in our school. It can be used from year to year to show student progress, and to help the ES know where to focus the writing instruction.
2. One copy should be given to the parent/student. The scored samples should be used to facilitate a productive educational session.
3. ESs should be prepared to explain to the parent why their child received the scores that they did, and suggestions as to what can be done to help improve their child's writing.
4. ESs should also be prepared to give some helpful writing curriculum suggestions and web links, and discuss some writing strategies for further instruction and practice.
5. ESs may want to suggest that after their students practice in the genre, that the student does an end-of-year re-write of the prompts that the ES scores and reviews with the student. This re-write is optional.
6. ESs may want to direct parents back again to the practice materials and writing instruction web links posted on the school's website. Additional links to prompts are also posted on our website.