Writing Testlet FAQ

Year-End Model Spring Window

Which Dynamic Learning Maps® (DLM®) students are assessed in writing? When are students assessed in writing?

All students in every grade are assessed in writing during the spring assessment window as a part of the assessment in English language arts.

How is writing assessed in DLM testlets?

There are two types of writing testlets: emergent writing testlets for students who do not yet have or are working on early symbolic understanding and conventional writing testlets for students who have symbolic understanding and can use writing tools to communicate. Writing testlets are similar to teacher-administered testlets in reading and mathematics where the test administrator engages in a scripted activity with a student outside Kite® Student Portal and then enters observations and ratings of the student's behavior into Student Portal. Emergent and conventional writing testlets require the test administrator to engage the student in writing about information using the tools the student normally writes with as a part of instruction and then observing the student's writing processes and products. Some items focus on teacher observation of the student's writing process. Other items require the teacher to evaluate the student's written product. Writing testlets are expected to take 10-20 minutes to administer.

When will writing be assessed? How will I know when my student has been assigned a writing testlet?

Each student will receive one writing testlet during the spring assessment window. The testlet form name, available on the Testlet Information Page (TIP), includes a code for the type of writing testlet and the grade. An emergent writing testlet for grade 8 will include the code EW.8 in the name. A conventional writing testlet for grade 8 will include CW.8. An example of the grade 8 form name for the conventional writing testlet in grade 8 is shown below.

SP ELA CW.8.YE T 6431

How do I submit the student's writing for scoring?

A student's writing product is not submitted in Student Portal. Test administrators evaluate the students' writing product according to the directions in Student Portal and enter their observations on rating scales similar to other teacher-administered testlets.

Are there linkage levels for the writing Essential Elements?

Yes, and the linkage levels are grouped together in writing testlets. The Initial and Distal Precursor linkage levels are combined in an emergent writing testlet. The Proximal Precursor, Target, and Successor linkage levels are combined in a conventional writing testlet. Essential Elements (EEs) are combined into a single writing testlet at every grade level.

What is emergent writing?

Emergent writing describes the marks, scribbles, and random selection of letters seen in beginning writers' work. The EEs in emergent writing testlets have students work toward an understanding of writing as a form of communication and the ability to write about information. Emergent writing testlets focus on nodes in the learning map model that are identified as important precursor skills on the way toward conventional writing. The professional development module called *Emergent Writing*, available through the DLM Professional Development website at https://www.dlmpd.com/, includes examples of strategies teachers can use to start writing with students as a part of instruction.

What is conventional writing?

Conventional writing includes methods of writing that use orthography (e.g., letters, words) assembled in ways that are meaningful to others. Key conceptual components of conventional writing include an understanding that words are comprised of letters, that words have meanings, and that written words can be put together in order to communicate to others. Key behaviors associated with conventional writing include writing letters and words through the use of a traditional writing tool or alternate pencil. Examples of conventional writing by students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can be seen in the professional development module called *Writing Production and Distribution*, available through the DLM Professional Development website at https://www.dlmpd.com/.

What are the general principles of assessing writing in the DLM system?

1. Maximize student independence while they write.
2. Assess writing in a way that is appropriate for all students. This is accomplished through a set of structured tasks within a testlet. Tasks assess the student's writing process and product, for both emergent and conventional writers.

What will students write about?

Testlets that assess writing allow students to select their own topic or to select a topic with assistance from test administrators. The writing-related EEs in the ELA blueprint focus on writing about information. Since writing is a complex process, students should be allowed to write about familiar informational topics. A student who is highly motivated to write about types of cars should be allowed to write about cars as part of their writing testlets. The tasks that the test administrator will guide the student through will focus on whether the student can write about information related to the selected topic. More information about instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities in writing can be found in the professional development module called *Writing Information and Explanation Texts*, available through the DLM Professional Development website at https://www.dlmpd.com/.

What counts as writing for students taking the DLM assessment?

When the testlet refers to "writing" or "the student wrote" in an answer option, observations can be of any method the student uses for writing, including eye-gaze or dictation of letters. Students may use word prediction, but selection of pictures or words from a word bank is not acceptable when the testlet requires writing. Dictation of whole words or sentences to the test administrator is not permitted.

How are students who do not physically write using paper and pencil or a traditional keyboard assessed?

The student can use whatever writing tool used during regular instruction if it includes access to all 26 letters of the alphabet. These tools can include pencil, pen, marker, whiteboard, keyboard, tablet keyboard, alternate keyboard, keyboard with word prediction software, alphabet flipbooks, and eye-gaze displays of letters. Students who use symbol systems or AAC devices should use them to communicate about the topic during the writing testlet, but should use the keyboard in the device or have access to an alternate pencil when the testlet requires writing.

Many students will need test administrators to help them access a tool for writing. Some examples of partner-assisted alternate pencils that can be used by students who cannot physically access a traditional pencil include: eye-gaze systems, alphabet flip-charts used with partner-assisted scanning, adapted keyboards and onscreen switch-enabled keyboards. Specific information about allowable tools is included in the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL. More information about alternate pencils and emergent writers can be found in the professional development modules called *Writing with Alternate Pencils and Emergent Writing*.

How can I prepare to administer a writing testlet?

The following professional development modules are recommended for test administrators who will deliver writing testlets.

- Writing: Text Types and Purposes
- Writing: Production and Distribution
- Writing Information and Explanation Texts
- Emergent Writing
- Writing with Alternate Pencils

Writing testlets are available to view in Student Portal before the test is administered by logging into Student Portal using the credentials below:

Username: demo.sue29

Password: wall3

Practice Testlet: Conventional Writing Grade 3

Select "Practice First." Then select the practice testlet listed above from the available practice testlets. Utilizing the testlet during instruction will allow the test administrator to become familiar with the contents of the testlet and the judgments they will make while administering this testlet to the student.

How do I access professional development modules?

Professional development modules are available at http://dlmpd.com.