Understanding Provincial Achievement Standards in Reading and Writing
Helping your child to be successful

Content includes the topic, focus, ideas and details of the piece of writing. In Boat Trip, for example, the writer has chosen to write about the MacDonalds’ boating trip, and enhanced the ideas by including details such as the raincoats and what they ate.

Organization reveals the form of the writing (letter, story, report, etc.) and the order and grouping of ideas. The story Boat Trip unfolds in a way that is easy to follow, with the setting and characters introduced at the beginning and the events presented in a logical sequence. Each paragraph contains related ideas.

Word Choice concerns the vocabulary and language that is used. The writer of Boat Trip used descriptive words (sticky and weary), technical phrases (changed its course) and figurative language (clear as glass).

Voice shows that the writer cares about the topic and is able to engage the reader. The reader gets a sense of the writer’s feelings and personality. In Boat Trip, several phrases show voice (decided to go for it, looking a little weary, and turned the boat and put the throttle at full speed).

Sentence Structure relates to the kinds, structures, lengths and beginnings of sentences that are used. In Boat Trip, a variety of complex sentence structures is used. (After they had been going ...) In Boat Trip, the writer has chosen to write about the MacDonalds’ boating trip, and enhanced the ideas by including details such as the raincoats and what they ate.

Conventions include spelling, punctuation and grammar. In the Boat Trip, the writer spelled almost all words correctly and used internal punctuation, such as commas and quotation marks.

You can be involved in building your preteen’s writing skills.

Before Writing
Invite your child to talk with you about the writing assignment and how the topic connects to your child’s own experiences. If your child is having trouble getting started, suggest that she or he try listing ideas, making an ideas web or brainstorming before beginning the first draft.

During Writing
This is a time to encourage independence. You can help by keeping the environment as free from distractions as possible.

After Writing
Be available to offer feedback and suggestions. Always begin by praising the strengths in the writing, referring to specific details. Help your preteen focus first on checking the ideas and organization of the piece prior to revising for voice, word choice and sentence structure. Lastly, encourage your child to read the piece aloud and to make edits to his or her own connections to punctuation, spelling and grammar.

Writing Revision Checklist

Content
I selected a topic with a main idea.
I included straight forward and predictable ideas and events.
I supported my ideas with effective details.

Organization
I used my introduction to let my readers know what I will be writing about.
I put my ideas in a logical order and organized them into paragraphs.
I included an obvious conclusion.

Word Choice
I included precise words and technical language.
I included descriptive words (adjectives, adverbs, strong verbs, strong nouns).

Voice
I made my reader interested in my topic.
I showed that I care about my topic.
I included personal feeling, energy and individuality.

Sentence Structure
I included different kinds of sentences, both simple and complex.
I included a variety of sentence lengths and beginnings to make my writing interesting.

Conventions
I included correct punctuation and capitalization.
I included internal punctuation (commas, quotation marks, apostrophes).
I used correct spelling.
I used correct verb tenses, subject-verb agreement and pronouns.

Now that your child has fully made the transition to middle school, he or she is maturing as a reader and writer. As a parent, you can continue to be a source of support and encouragement while respecting his or her independence.

End of Grade 7
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Recognize the signs of a successful reader.

In Grade 7, your adolescent will read a variety of fiction and non-fiction that may cover topics beyond her or his personal experiences. Some will have mature themes that deal with human problems, such as abuse, war or racism. You can tell whether your child is reading successfully by watching for growth in the following reading behaviors, described in the Provincial Achievement Standards for the end of Grade 7.

Checking for understanding and adjusting reading strategies when meaning is lost

- Encourage your child to stop and ask questions when reading.

Examining visual elements

- Ask your child to explain the purpose of pictures, graphs, tables, and other visual elements in the text.

Understanding comparisons

- Ask your child to identify and explain differences and similarities between text and real-world situations.

Making connections

- Ask your child to relate the text to his or her own experiences or to other texts.

Using strategies to solve unknown words independently

- Ask your child to look for context clues, use context clues, and use a dictionary to solve unknown words.

Reading with expression and confidence

- Ask your child to read aloud to you sometimes. Praise his or her efforts.

Verifying and adjusting predictions while reading

- Ask your child to use clues in the text and text features (e.g., titles, headings, photographs and captions) to make predictions and then check how close they were.

Reflecting on strategies used to understand what is read

- Ask your child to tell you how she or he uses strategies to improve understanding (e.g., forming mental pictures while reading, making connections, asking questions).

You can be involved in building your child’s reading skills.

Although your child is more independent, you still play an active part in his or her learning. One way is to help your child set aside enough time for reading. When possible, give your child a choice of reading materials that are appealing (newspapers, magazines, suitable internet sites). Invite your child to talk about what he or she is reading. You might enjoy reading some of the same books and discussing them. If you do, here are some examples of questions you could ask each other to get the conversation started:

- Why is this event or character’s action important to the story?
- What do you think the author wants you to think about and remember?
- Does the author keep you interested in this selection? How?
- Do you think that the author is presenting all viewpoints?

The language in reading material for this age is more challenging, so your child may occasionally have to use a dictionary or glossary, or look for clues in the surrounding text, to understand a word or phrase.

In fiction, plots are more complicated (subplots, multiple story lines, unexpected twists). Main characters can be more complex and unpredictable, with shades of good and bad.

Information text, such as the extract from Andrew Hollemann: On a Mission, convey additional information through text features, such as subheadings, captions, bold type and subheads (Andrew’s Argument). At this age level, the amount of information presented may require the reader to synthesize ideas rather than remember every detail.

The Department of Education is committed to your child’s reading and writing success. If you have any questions about your child’s progress or about how you can be an active part of his or her learning, contact your child’s teacher or the provincial literacy team at 506-453-2812.

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