

How Students Can Self-Assess Their Writing



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In my previous blog post, I described how our primary grade students completed a 10-page report primarily in their own words on mud and soil. Our team then completed a Mud Report Student Evaluation for each student that highlighted their abilities to complete their mud report.

Five Mud Report Components

Listed below are the five questions that were used to evaluate each student with comments on each student's report:

Did the student research and copy text on the internet and from books with ease?

Did the student write the report from multiple sources and combine information without help?

Did the student blend information from various sources and apply what was read to personal life

experiences and other experiences?

Did the student work diligently with ease on the project?

Is the report's content, spelling, punctuation, and printing easy to read?

Student Levels of Accomplishment

We then rated these skills at the following four levels of accomplishment on each report component with comments based on the common core standards for primary grade students:

Level 1 Learning Basics: Student researched and copied nonfiction text on a topic in books and on the internet with lots of help. Student wrote the report with difficulty and help. Content, spelling, punctuation, and printing were hard to read.

Level 2 Demonstrates Understanding: Student researched and copied nonfiction text on a topic in books and on the internet with some help. Student wrote the report and blended some information with some difficulty and help. Content, spelling, punctuation, and printing were sometimes hard to read.

Level 3 Modifying Basics: Student researched and copied nonfiction text on a topic in books and on the internet without help. Student wrote the report from multiple sources and blended and applied some information in the report. Student worked diligently with ease. Content, spelling, punctuation, and printing were easy to read.

Level 4 Emerging Expert: Student researched and copied nonfiction text on a topic in books and on the internet with ease. Student wrote the report from multiple sources and extensively blended and applied information in the report. Student worked diligently with ease. Content, spelling, punctuation, and printing were easy to read.

Students' Responses to Their Evaluation Comments

As we completed a rating for each student, we qualified the rating with personalized comments that focused on specific skills achieved when completing various report assignments. Students were very excited when we described specific behaviors and skill building attributes to specific examples captured in their 10-page reports.

Most were shocked that we actually read their reports and took the time to show them how to punctuate their reports correctly. Many are still learning how to self-edit their work and are surprised that we observed this amount of detail in our review of their work. Other students could not believe that they were working beyond their grade level in writing. We explained that the more they were able to synthesize their work and apply their writing to daily experiences and observations, the higher level writing they were able to create independently.

Challenged students were very excited that they were able to complete this very demanding assignment

regardless of how much help we provided them. They want to slow down, print more carefully, and learn to self-edit. I encouraged these students to read parts of a story or nonfiction information daily and practice rewriting small passages daily in a journal. Through practice, these students will become self-confident writers. The more students expose themselves to difficult articles and books, the more confident they will become when completing challenging assignments.

What We Learned

We have been using this assignment and customized rubric for three years with multiple classes. Each year we become more successful in increasing students' skill levels at a faster pace than previous years. I think we just keep learning how to teach better and more confidently as we coach students to integrate nonfiction informational writing with daily life experiences and observations.

We Are Here to Help

If you and your students or children want to learn how to evaluate writing assignments, you may be interested in reading *Student-Engaged Assessment: Strategies to Empower All Learners* by Laura Greenstein and Mary Ann Burke. Our team is available to provide trainings to your schools and teachers. You can contact us on our blog site under the comments section on the lower part of the blog page. Also, if you are interested in a simplified approach to teaching students about mud at the first or second grade level, we have posted an

online book link on *Magnificent Magical Mud* by Mary Ann Burke at the bottom of our blog site. This online book includes simple writing assignments for students and children. Much success in the great adventure of student led learning through self-assessment.