Writing Testlet FAQ

Fall and 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 every year as a part of the English language arts blueprint. Writing testlets are available for all DLM students during the fall and spring windows.

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 of Kite® Student Portal and then enters observations and ratings of the student's behavior into Student Portal. Emergent writing testlets 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 10-15 minutes to administer.

How do the ELA blueprint and Essential Element selections in the Instruction and Assessment Planner align?

What test administrators see in Educator Portal when choosing Essential Elements through the Instruction and Assessment Planner is not an exact match to the ELA blueprint. This is because Essential Elements and linkage levels are combined into testlets. In high school, C2.1 AND C2.2 linkage level testlets are placed under ONLY the C2.1 heading in the Instruction and Assessment Planner.

What test administrators see on the ELA blueprint (Grade 6 example):

ELA.C2.1	Requirement: All students are assessed in these Essential Elements through the writing assessment. In the Instruction and Assessment Planner, choose one linkage level. See Writing Testlet FAQ for more detail.	
	EE.L.6.2.b	Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on letter-sound relationships and common spelling patterns.
	EE.W.6.2.a	Introduce a topic and write to convey ideas and information about it including visual, tactual, or multimedia information as appropriate.
	EE.W.6.2.b	Provide facts, details, or other information related to the topic.

What test administrators see in the Instruction and Assessment Planner (Grade 6 example):

┌─ All students are assessed in writing and must take one writing testlet. Select the appropriate linkage level for the writing testlet. ──

Claim: ELA.C2 Students can produce writing for a range of purposes and audiences.
Conceptual Area: ELA.C2.1 Use writing to communicate

Not Complete

Essential Element	Initial Precursor	Distal Precursor	Proximal Precursor	Target	Successor
ELA.EE.EW.6.IP Emergent Writing	identifies descriptors and picks between objects				
ELA.EE.EW.6.DP Emergent Writing		can relate to text and understands wh-questions			
ELA.EE.CW.6.PP Conventional Writing			can write one fact using supplementary information		
ELA.EE.CW.6.T Conventional Writing				introduces a topic with facts and details	
ELA.EE.CW.6.S Conventional Writing					uses clear organization to write facts on a topic

Each of the writing Essential Elements available for selection includes items that cover all the requirements for the ELA blueprint. For a conventional writing testlet, choose an Essential Element with CW in the name. For an emergent writing testlet, choose an Essential Element with EW in the name.

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. Emergent and conventional writing testlets are available for every grade. Since Essential Elements are combined into a single writing testlet at every grade level, the codes used in Student Portal will look different from the Essential Elements that appear on the ELA blueprint. Emergent writing testlets are labeled with EW in the Essential Element code. Conventional writing testlets will be labeled with CW in the Essential Element code.

For example, Grade 4 Writing Essential Element codes will appear in Student Portal as:

FALL ELA EW.4 IP	This is a testlet with ELA Essential Elements for Emergent Writing, Grade 4, Initial Precursor in the fall window
FALL ELA EW.4 DP	This is a testlet with ELA Essential Element for Emergent Writing, Grade 4, Distal Precursor in the fall window
FALL ELA CW.4 PP	This is a testlet with ELA Essential Elements for Conventional Writing, Grade 4, Proximal Precursor in the fall window

FALL ELA CW.4 T	This is a testlet with ELA Essential Elements for Conventional Writing, Grade 4, Target in the fall window
FALL ELA CW.4 S	This is a testlet with ELA Essential Elements for Conventional Writing, Grade 4, Successor in the fall window

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 products according to the directions in Student Portal and enter their observations on rating scales similar to other teacher-administered testlets.

What is emergent writing?

Emergent writing describes the marks, scribbles, and random selection of letters seen in beginning writers' work. The Essential Elements 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 neighborhood that are identified as important precursor skills on the way toward conventional writing. The DLM 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, have meaning, 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 DLM 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 Kite 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 Essential Elements 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 the most 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 alternate 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. Speech-to-text and 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 augmentative and alternative communication 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 these professional development modules called *Writing with Alternate Pencils* and *Emergent Writing*, available through the DLM Professional Development website at https://www.dlmpd.com/.

How can I prepare to administer a writing testlet?

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

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

Before administering a writing testlet, access the Testlet Information Page to learn more about what is needed for a specific testlet.

> 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 test administrators 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 DLM professional development modules?

DLM professional development modules are available at http://dlmpd.com.