

The Essential Skill of Writing



Why a focus on Writing skills for graduation?

Writing matters! It matters in any academic setting. It also matters in a growing number of work environments where doing any job effectively requires employees to communicate clearly and precisely through print. A national survey of 120 major American corporations employing nearly 8 million individuals concluded that "...writing is a ticket to professional opportunity, while poorly written job applications are a figurative kiss of death. **Writing is a "threshold skill" for both employment and promotion....**" (National Commission on Writing, 2004, p. 3)

While writing is an invaluable skill that requires students to use specific strategies such as planning, evaluating, and revising to demonstrate their knowledge about a topic and how well they can use writing to convey that knowledge about, for example, a natural habitat, or express an opinion about the right to privacy, or write a poem or story about an experience with uncertainty, it is also a powerful tool for learning. Writing helps students extend and deepen their knowledge in any discipline from music to history to mathematics. In other words, writing should be used as a tool to develop knowledge just as reading is such a tool. Not only does writing help students learn subject matter in any content discipline, it is a highly effective way to help students learn to read with increasingly deep levels of comprehension (Graham & Perrin, 2007).

What is required for graduation and when?

Students who were first enrolled as 9th graders in 2009-10 must demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skill of Writing to earn a diploma. Below are the approved assessment options available to students to show that they have met the requirement.

Approved Assessment Options		Achievement Scores
1.	OAKS Writing Performance Assessment	Composite Score of 40
2.	ACT Writing	19*
3.	SAT Writing	460*
4.	Local Performance Assessment: 2 Writing Work Samples - One Expository or Persuasive - One from any mode (Expository, Persuasive, Fictional or Personal Narrative)	Score: 4 on each of the four required traits for each of the two work samples; locally scored with the Official State Writing Scoring Guide Required traits are Ideas/Content; Organization; Sentence Fluency; Conventions

** These achievement standards are based on the composite score derived from both the selected response and direct-writing portions of the test. The SAT refers to this as the Writing section of the SAT (49 selected response questions and a timed, 25-minute essay). The ACT refers to this as the combined English/Writing test (75 selected response questions and a timed, 30-minute essay).*

How should schools prepare students for meeting the Writing Essential Skill graduation requirement?

Writing expectations leading to proficiency in the Writing Essential Skill are described in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy. Districts and schools should align curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the standards. The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework – **Writing** gives guidance on teaching the standards in English language arts classes and also in content-area classes. Additional resources to assist schools with implementation are listed on the next page.