

Regulations Governing Writing Instruction and Assessment Policy (Policy IGAA)

PURPOSE

To update procedures and practices to be followed in support of Policy IGAA.

INTRODUCTION

A major goal of the Alexandria City Public Schools is to provide a rigorous, relevant, and internationally benchmarked education to enable all students to succeed as citizens in the global community. To be prepared for post-secondary education and a range of potential career pathways, every student must become proficient in written expression for a range of purposes using a variety of rhetorical domains (i.e., descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive writing). Effective writing instruction enables students to:

1. Express their ideas, thoughts, and opinions clearly and effectively.
2. Summarize, synthesize, and evaluate information learned from a variety of sources into a written product.
3. Match writing styles and formats to respond to a specific purpose and intended audience.
4. Develop a deeper understanding of essential knowledge, skills, and procedures in all content areas.
5. Revise and edit all written communications using the principles and rules of Standard English grammar and usage.
6. Progress from dependent writers to independent writers who consistently assess and revise their own writing.
7. Increase students' language proficiency in the use of formal academic language in a variety of forms of written expression.
8. Enhance their reading comprehension through written reflection and analysis.

TEACHER REQUIREMENTS

Teacher guidelines for writing instruction and assessment include:

1. Writing in the content areas should be a regular part of all subject areas to reinforce students' understanding of essential knowledge, skills and procedures, including students' reading comprehension, through emphasis upon the reading-writing connection.
2. The writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing) should be used to help students practice and perfect writing skills. Teachers need to determine which assignments require the completion of all stages of the writing process (versus more informal types of written discourse, such as journal entries).

3. Throughout their school career, students should develop proficiency in major forms of written expression, including narrative, descriptive, expository, procedural, persuasive and literary analysis writing.
4. Regular opportunities for students to write should include but not be limited to:
 - Formal essays
 - Brief and extended response essay questions
 - Formal and informal written responses to unit essential questions
 - Writer’s Workshop
 - Warm-up and activator activities at the beginning of lessons and at key transition points within a lesson
 - Journal writing in all content areas, as appropriate
 - Reader responses to literature, texts, articles and/or other primary and secondary-source documents
 - Directions
 - Letters
 - Science labs
 - Mathematical explanations
 - Social studies document-based questions
 - Other forms of written expression, as appropriate
5. Students should engage in regular opportunities for research-based writing, including:
 - Formulating and investigating a formal research question
 - Using a range of sources to ensure balance and completeness in analysis
 - Constructing and defending a thesis statement
 - Developing a well-organized and fully supported introduction, body, and conclusion
 - Using a universally accepted protocol for citing sources
 - Constructing a viable bibliography
6. Writing assignments shall receive either formal or informal feedback in a timely manner.
7. Writing expectations should be communicated to students through the use of rubrics at the same time as the purpose, timeline and specific criteria for writing assignments are explained.
8. Grammar, usage, and mechanics will be taught within the context of authentic writing experiences, as opposed to isolated skill practice.
9. The ability to self-assess one’s writing is a key skill for students to master. Teachers must model how to revise, edit and provide students with ample opportunities to practice these skills.
10. Teachers will prepare students for unit transfer tasks (in alignment with the document “Sequence of Writing Assignments in English, Mathematics, Science, and Social

Studies,” available on the Curriculum Blackboard website). This preparation should include explicit instruction (including modeling and formative feedback) related to the requirements of specific writing genre required by each task.

11. Writing terminology—including genre descriptions—should be consistent with the document “ACPS Writing Genres: Establishing a Common Language for Transfer Tasks and Writing Across Content Areas,” available on the Curriculum Blackboard website.

SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

School guidelines for writing instruction and assessment should include:

1. Writing expectations will be communicated to parents through Back-to-School Nights, curriculum nights, conferences, newsletters, and/or other forms of communication.
2. Writing assignments should be reflected in each quarter’s grades.
3. The principal or his/her designee will monitor the appropriate grade-level use and completion of writing assignments using the ACPS Measurement Topic Rubrics in alignment with the documents referenced above. Monitoring will be through the standard means of lesson observations and lesson plan reviews.
4. Teachers will build common expectations within and across grade levels, including shared examination and scoring of student written products to build inter-rater reliability as part of the scoring process. Student exemplars on the Blackboard Curriculum page will serve as anchors for establishing inter-rater reliability.
5. Specific writing tasks for each curriculum unit will be delineated in the ACPS curriculum guides. A compilation of writing tasks for the English Language Arts, mathematics, science and social studies shall be published on the ACPS website.
6. Whenever possible, writing assignments should reinforce students’ reading comprehension, including reflective and analytical writing in response to fiction and informational text.

Approved: February 24, 2015