

The Purpose and Uses of the 3-Point Drafting Rubric

The new “3-Point Drafting Analytic Assessment Tool” was created to provide trait criterion descriptors that are not only consistent with those in the 5-Point Publishing scale currently in use for writing assessment in Kansas, but also more responsive to developmental issues student writers might experience as they approach the writing process. In the deep structure traits of ideas and content, organization, and voice the 3-Point Drafting rubric is couched in language that emphasizes the pre-writing skills of establishing purpose and audience, focusing on a main idea, and shaping relevant details to support it. In that sense, the 3-point scale can be regarded as a set of drafting rubrics suggesting through the criterion and descriptor levels of its incremental scaling, the “next steps” the writer should pursue in revision and editing.

The 3-point drafting scale is also responsive to development of the emerging surface structure traits of word choice, sentence fluency, and the basic conventions of spelling, capitalization, and end-punctuation. Combined, the 3-point and 5-point scales offer writing students an expanded repertoire of leveled feedback as they write, revise and edit, re-write and revise and edit again, bringing the piece to a publishable state.

In addition to the expanded feedback the two rubrics can provide in drafting and publishing, students whose educational needs warrant additional access can also be accommodated with a scribe, assistive devices, signing resources, an Braille writer, a tape recorder, a slate and stylus, or a translating dictionary.

These accommodations, the expanded leveling provided in the 3-point Drafting rubric, and the provisions for polishing and publishing offered in the 5-point Publishing rubric offer teachers a variety of instructional tools that can be used for selective and differentiated writing instruction so that students are not overwhelmed with all the elements of the writing task at once. Students with similar needs, for example, can be grouped for instruction and, with the addition of electronic resources now available in the Kansas Writing Instruction and Editing Tool (KWIET), teachers and students can engage in portfolio assessments that extend the writing process beyond the production of individual pieces and into a more meta-cognitive study of how a student’s writing develops over multiple writing opportunities over time.

With the KWIET tool at their fingertips, writing students and their teachers gain even greater access to the dynamic elements of composition. As time goes on and communities of writers and their teachers develop expertise with these writing tools, the tools themselves will evolve, becoming at once more transparent, more accessible, and more integrated with the Common Core Standards of reading and language development. Like reading, writing, and language itself, the writing tools are constantly in the process of becoming further refined.

A Brief History of and Rationale for the 3-Point Drafting Rubric

An example of such constant refinement is the history of the current version of the 3-point analytic tool. Its foundation in the Kansas Assessment of Modified Measures (KAMM) writing instrument published in September 2003 was the result of two years of work by two different committees of Kansas teachers who merged their separate efforts with developing a writing rubric tool for English Language Learners (ELL) with one developed for Students with Disabilities (SWD). Originally used with both populations, the single tool that emerged from the collaborative efforts of the two groups became identified with only the SWD population after federal guidelines restricted the rubric’s use to that population. The Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA) was used for assessing the writing of ELL Students.

However, many writing teachers outside of special education discovered that the KAMM Writing Assessment offered instructional advantages the regular education tool did not offer. Like the regular ed rubric, the KAMM provided descriptors at 3 levels (1, 3, 5) but the KAMM tool focused on essential elements only, using the principles of “universal test design” for language more streamlined than the language used in the original 6-Trait Analytic Writing tool, which Kansas had adopted had using throughout the state from January 1992 to Spring 2009.

In addition, in the KAMM instrument the 4 trait-criterion were consistent across grade levels so that now, for example, a rater could more easily see how the criterion of “structure,” “sequencing,” “transitions, and “connections” developed from a 1 to a 3 to a 5 within the trait of organization. Similar grouping of criterion occurred in each of the other traits. As a result, instructional application in the classroom made the KAMM rubrics much easier for a number of students, and many teachers began to rely solely on the KAMM rubrics for instruction.

However, even the KAMM rubrics had limitations. Originally set roughly within the drafting state of the regular ed rubric, the upper bound of the KAMM rubric, the “5,” did not emphasize the more developed polishing required of writing in the stage of publishing. In addition, the “5” assigned to the top score in the KAMM did not reflect the rigor of the “5” in the 5-point gen ed rubric. Even though numbers used in writing rubrics represent a rank order and do not possess an absolute value in themselves, the value assigned to a KAMM piece seemed to many educators to “inflate” the writing scores of SWD students, even though the rubric may have been more appropriate than the gen ed rubric for their access to assessment.

In addition, some educators discovered during assessment that many SWD students taking a KAMM assessment produced writing that was really more appropriately assessed with the gen ed rubric. Often, particular traits receiving higher KAMM scores should have been assessed with the gen ed rubric, while other traits, less developed, would be more appropriately assessed within the KAMM rubric. Sometimes teachers had not graduated students into the gen ed rubric at all or had not used the two rubrics in tandem so that students had to make an abrupt transition to the 5-point scale.

Educators from across the instructional spectrum suggested changes. The gen ed rubric needed to be revised to include criterion and universal test design language similar to the criteria and language used in the KAMM. Once the revision of the gen ed rubric had been accomplished, many educators then saw a need to align the now differing criterion of both rubrics, concentrate the descriptors of the KAMM rubric on pre-writing and drafting and change the KAMM scale to three points with an upper bound of 3 rather than 5 points with an upper bound of 5.

In April 2010, the Kansas Assessment Advisory Council adopted a proposal submitted by Jim Heiman of Kansas City to make these revisions. Already planning on similar changes, KSDE accepted the spirit and direction of the proposal and circulated it to SWD educators in key positions throughout the state for their feedback. Many of those reviewers had served on the original committees that had developed the KAMM nine years earlier in 2001-2003.

With their feedback, KSDE Writing Consultant Matt Copeland and KSDE Special Education Consultant Deborah Mathews organized a committee comprised of SWD educators from across the state. Rebecceca Judge, Charlene Lueck, and Debbie Stewardt at grade 5; Ann Fritz, Meri L. Miller Kahl, Celeste Kern, and Mona Tjader at grade 8; and Michele Luksa, T. Kraft, _____ McNemar, and _____ Tucker at grade 11 met on 3 separate occasions to revise the narrative, expository and persuasive KAMM rubrics used at their respective grade levels and to test and adjust the rubrics with KAMM papers drawn from the Spring 2009 state writing assessment.

Based on the characteristics and range of writing represented in the sample of 86 papers, 11 rubric writers worked in teams to develop descriptors for the same criterion which the 5-Point scale was already using. Grade-level teams wrote score rationales, resolved discrepancies, adjusted and leveled descriptors, and recommended training papers that could be used as exemplars in a new 3-point Drafting scoring manual that could be used not only with SWD students but with other students, as well.

Jim Heiman, now retired from Kansas City, then collated their work, selecting 16 exemplars or “anchor” papers representative of various score levels, in various configurations of deep to surface structure. For each paper Heiman composed “Scorer Commentaries” to articulate the thinking raters might follow as they rated a paper in a typical writing assessment. Thus, rater commentaries might begin with a characteristic writing feature that stood out especially, such as idiosyncratic word choice, confused syntax, non-standard spelling, or an overwhelming voice. Such features might well obscure or impede the reader’s efforts to construct meaning from the writing. If no such issues presented themselves in the exemplar piece, Heiman then began with the trait of organization to summarize the structure and development of idea, then moved on to relationship among ideas through the piece, and finally on to choice of words, syntax and use of conventions.

Following the “Scorer Commentary” Heiman then developed “suggestions for Revisions,” which addressed issues raised in the commentaries by focusing on those instructional strategies most necessary for the piece to develop. Heiman concluded each set of suggestions for revision by returning the instructor to the rubric to determine with the student the next step to develop the piece through drafting and into the stages of publishing.

Finally, with the assistance of the raters, Heiman selected 16 un-annotated pieces from the 2009 KAMM samples. These un-annotated pieces are offered to teachers as “training papers for scoring sessions or to use as exemplars with their own students.

The 16 un-annotated and 16 annotated training papers, the revised and re-aligned 3-point scale rubrics, and the two-year old 5-point scale constitute a “scoring manual” and are now being incorporated into the KWIET tool as the next generation of writing assessment in Kansas continues to evolve.

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