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Kentucky's State-Mandated Writing Portfolios and Teacher Accountability

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Mandated Portfolios

AS THEIR USE BECOMES MORE WIDESPREAD, PORTFOLIOS ARE BEING ASKED to function in a variety of ways. In exploring how portfolio design may encourage multiple purposes, though, some of us have begun to suspect that not all purposes are compatible. This suspicion can be seen in the growing tension between those who believe portfolios function best as a highly personalized pedagogy kept deliberately separate from formal assessment and grading and those who see portfolios as a desirable vehicle for assessing individual proficiency. As these two factions have begun eyeing each other with increasing puzzlement and dismay, however, a third perspective has entered the portfolio discussion: Portfolios are being offered as an ideal instrument to provide external accountability.¹

Of course, designing any portfolio system that provides clear and useful information about a writing program presents a difficult challenge, but Kentucky increased this difficulty by deliberately using portfolios to drive massive school reform. The new portfolio-based accountability system was designed to encourage the benefits we have already identified for students and teachers who use portfolios while at the same time functioning as a test of these benefits. Although a number of states are experimenting with ways portfolios might be used to assess student writing, only Kentucky has

abruptly required portfolio assessment as part of a larger education reform effort and factored the resulting portfolio scores into the formula used to hold each individual school accountable for the education it is providing (Reidy 1992). Not surprisingly, the resulting portfolio system has thus far been only partially successful in meeting all the expectations its creators have for it.

My concerns about using portfolios for accountability stem from a year-long study of the way the new state-mandated portfolios are being understood and implemented in one Kentucky high school. Although my study focused on the English teachers' responses to the writing portfolio requirement, I am aware that many of their reactions were colored by other aspects of school reform they were also encountering.² Thus, in describing the second year of the portfolio requirement, I am also describing the second year of living with the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Situating accountability portfolios within the emotionally charged atmosphere of education reform makes them particularly vulnerable because it is difficult to examine the portfolio system as a discrete element within the overall reform plan. Nevertheless, I feel the Kentucky experience can be highly instructive for those who are interested in using portfolios for accountability because although the circumstances surrounding the Kentucky portfolio assessment system are unique, the goals of the assessment and the methods the state has used to encourage compliance are not.

A Test Worth Taking

In the fall of 1991 Kentucky began requiring writing portfolios from all its fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students as one of the first elements of its school reform plan. In using portfolios as a formal test, the state was following the lead of certain theorists who are convinced that since teachers are known to teach to the test, tests should be used to drive curriculum. Having become disenchanted with the ubiquitous standardized test, these theorists are looking for models of what Grant Wiggins calls "an authentic test," a test that is "worth taking" because it reveals how the test taker can actually use knowledge to solve real world problems.³ Those who follow this line of reasoning believe carefully designed portfolio systems should be authentic tests of writing ability because they encourage students to think and behave like professional writers. According to Tish Wilson, who was the Writing Program Director at the Kentucky Department of Education during the first two years of portfolio assessment, the system

is intended to influence classroom instruction in a positive way. In her words, it is expected to “change curriculum to encourage more writing and process-guided instruction.”

The contents of the portfolios collected at the three grade levels were carefully stipulated in order to elicit the kind of writing the state wanted to encourage, and the scoring guide was designed to reward writers who succeeded in providing evidence of those writing elements deemed most important in effective communication. During the second year of portfolio assessment the twelfth grade portfolios began with a table of contents, followed by a personal narrative, a short piece of fiction, and three pieces of writing created in response to one of seven “purposes” such as “to predict an outcome,” “to defend a position,” or “to solve a problem.” Two of the pieces in the portfolio had to come from classes other than English because the Department of Education intended portfolio assessment to increase the amount of writing done in all classes. Finally, each portfolio ended with a Letter to the Reviewer reflecting on the pieces in the portfolio and providing some insight into the writer’s composing process. (For information about the Letter to the Reviewer, see Appendix B.)

The scoring guide had two sections. The first portion asked readers to evaluate each portfolio holistically, using a rubric that emphasized audience and purpose as the most important feature of the writing and provided a description of the additional factors that should be used to place portfolios in each of the categories described in the rubric. The second portion asked readers to indicate “commendations” or “needs” using an analytic annotation chart keyed in descending order of importance from “purpose/approach,” through “idea development/support,” “organization,” “sentences,” and “wording,” to “surface features.” (See Appendix A for a copy of the scoring guide.)

Building the Boat While Sailing

I spent the 1992 to 1993 school year using basic ethnographic principles to study how a nine-member English department was responding to this requirement and how their responses were affecting their students. The high school, called Pine View for the purposes of my study, fell within the midrange of Kentucky schools in most areas currently documented by the Department of Education (*Profiles*). The nine women who comprised the department were bright, well-educated, articulate, and conscientious. The least experienced teacher had taught six years and the most experienced had

been teaching for twenty-seven. All but the youngest teacher had a master's degree in education, and several held Rank I, which requires thirty hours of education beyond the master's. In choosing to focus on the teachers rather than the portfolio system itself, I hoped to discover some needed information about a crucial link between portfolio theory and practice: How are portfolios understood and used by teachers who must implement them as a state-mandated test of their own ability to teach as well as their students' success in learning?

The second year of writing portfolios in Kentucky was, of course, greatly influenced by what had happened during the first year when that initial group of seniors had been told that they must submit a portfolio in order to graduate, and the teachers and administrators had learned that portfolios would count as one sixth of a complex "accountability index" assigned to each school. Once this initial score had been computed, each school was given an individual, numerical target score to reach within two years. Teachers and administrators were told that schools could expect rewards and sanctions based on their performance. In addition to seeing their school's scores published and discussed in the news, teachers knew they could expect financial rewards if their schools showed substantial improvement, while teachers associated with schools with declining scores could find their institutions declared "a school in crisis." If that happened, they could receive additional training, be transferred, or be fired (Foster 1991).

The Department of Education provided information about how they had used the Vermont portfolio system as a model,⁴ hired Advanced Systems Testing to provide professional guidance, and involved a number of Kentucky teachers in designing the content requirements and scoring guide. However, most teachers, including those at Pine View, knew nothing about portfolios before they received the requirements for the new fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade writing assessments. The legislative demands for swift implementation of education reform measures meant that the Department of Education had to learn about portfolios, create a large and complex portfolio system, implement it, test it, explain it to all interested parties, and attempt to refine it all at the same time. Within the Division of Performance Testing, the director of the Kentucky Writing Program had the primary responsibility for getting the portfolio system in place. She described the entire process as "building the boat while we are sailing it" (Wilson 1992). The speed with which teachers and administrators were expected to absorb, accept, and administer this new approach to writing assessment naturally intensified the apprehension and confusion that surrounds the

implementation of any new teaching method or educational policy.⁵ When I began my study in the fall of 1992, the Pine View English teachers were feeling a great deal of tension as they attempted to determine just what their building's first set of portfolio scores might mean for their teaching during the upcoming year. They were also angry and confused because over the summer the state Department of Education had changed the original five-point assessment scale to a four-point scale, and all the portfolio scores had been correspondingly lowered.⁶ They felt their hard work during the previous year had been discounted and that many individual students had been evaluated as writing more poorly than their teachers believed they actually did. Their tension was exacerbated by learning the portfolio content requirements for the second year had also been changed to eliminate two categories some teachers had begun to plan writing assignments around. While these new requirements came with reasonable explanations from the state, the teachers saw the changes as evidence that the Department of Education "does not know what it is doing" and felt apprehensive that the requirements might be changed yet again.

Finally, the English teachers were becoming increasingly resentful of bearing the portfolio burden for the entire school. Although they had no real control over the pieces that students had to provide from non-English classes, they felt the principal was holding them responsible as a department for the quality of the resulting portfolios. They also felt it was unfair for them to be expected to give hours of their time to helping students assemble their work and then to reading and scoring schoolwide portfolios while other faculty had no such responsibility. Their discontent was fueled by the knowledge that because the state had left the selection of portfolio readers and the granting of release time and/or stipends for scoring portfolios to the discretion of individual school districts, some of their colleagues in other districts seemed to be receiving more consideration than they were.

In early November, the English department sponsored a workshop by a consultant from the Department of Education who was expected to provide suggestions for ways teachers could incorporate meaningful writing assignments into their various courses. Although the resource teacher did provide an excellent overview of Kentucky's expectations for writing across the curriculum and a theoretical foundation for the roles of assessment and "student-centered classrooms" in curriculum design, the English teachers were disappointed she did not give faculty in social studies, business, and science the opportunity to see or develop some model writing assignments.

In the course of her presentation, the consultant frequently referred to “classroom working folders” and the importance they had in helping students learn to develop portfolios. When I subsequently asked the Pine View English teachers about what they understood these classroom folders to be, they indicated that these folders were intended for storage so that students would have papers to use for their senior portfolios. Consequently, during the year, only one of the teachers experimented with a form of portfolio grading in one of her classes. Her decision to “try” classroom portfolios was based on her own reading, and she received no specific encouragement or assistance in doing so. When I asked her to tell me about her experience, she said she believed it was “a good idea in theory,” but that it was making her “suicidal” and she couldn’t imagine doing it in all of her classes.

In response to the previous year’s experience with portfolios and their understanding of “working folders,” the Pine View English Department had begun a central file for students to use to collect potential portfolio pieces. The teachers asked students at all grade levels to give them pieces to put into this file. By February the file mainly contained pieces written in English classes because students frequently forgot to add material written in other content area courses. Consequently, when students in the senior class of 1993 began assembling their portfolios, 52 percent of them believed they had at least six pieces in their central file, but 42 percent said only one or two of these pieces came from non-English classes. The teachers were hopeful, though, that the students who were currently in grades nine, ten, and eleven would have larger and more varied collections by the time they were seniors.

In addition to creating the central file, the English department had made one other response to the first year of portfolio assessment. They had begun to discuss revising the curriculum so that seniors would work with a single English teacher for the entire year rather than moving from one elective course to another, because this structure would make it easier to supervise portfolio assembly which began shortly after the start of the second semester. This curricular change eventually was made, but not without a great deal of regret on the part of several teachers who had developed specialty courses that allowed them to teach areas of particular interest. One teacher agreed to give up a very popular semester-long course comparing Greek mythology and Hebrew Scripture, and another agreed to give up a class in regional writers. At the end of the year, they were still considering whether to provide a single, year-long senior English course or give students a choice of emphases. They were also trying to decide if

they could continue offering semester-long courses in creative writing and speech within the new curriculum design.

Although all the teachers understood the necessity for spending more class time on writing, most were uncomfortable with doing so not only because it meant less time for literature, but because only three of the nine teachers had ever received any training in the teaching of writing, two through the Bluegrass Writing Project, and one through a special workshop. Not surprisingly, they all felt very insecure about being viewed as the building experts in this area. Nevertheless, near the end of the second year of portfolio assessment they began to discuss a possible writing in-service they could provide for other faculty and ways they could incorporate more “purposes” writing that was not intended as literary analysis.

In spite of their often professed insecurity, the nine teachers *were* teaching writing, and several were doing it remarkably well. Even before the portfolio requirement, they all had understood and taught some form of process writing and some had begun to make use of peer editing groups. During this second year of portfolio assessment, however, most of them were still struggling with what they saw as “their job” of offering editing suggestions and the time constraints imposed by the increasing amount of writing they were having their students do. As they regularly taught between 80 and 130 students, the time they were willing and able to spend reading student papers influenced the amount of writing they felt they could assign. By the end of the year, a few had begun to use the terminology of the scoring rubric in their classrooms as they discussed writing, but most were too busy helping students understand the various categories of writing the state required to assist them with learning to assess their own work.

As for the responsibility of helping students assemble their senior portfolios, all the teachers spent a tremendous amount of their planning time during the day and before and after school working with individual students, partly to reduce the amount of class time that needed to be devoted to the process. They were also concerned with finding ways to motivate students to work on their portfolios. Some teachers assigned a point value to portfolio work and factored those points into the course grade. Others were reluctant to do this because the portfolios were seen as a compilation of writing from many courses and not an aspect of work done to fulfill the requirements for a specific senior literature course. Most difficult of all was working with students who had completed their required English courses and were not enrolled in English at all during the second semester of their senior year.

Scoring the Portfolios

The teachers viewed their final responsibility, that of scoring the portfolios, with a mixture of apprehension and resignation. The woman who was the designated “cluster leader” for Pine View attended a portfolio scoring workshop provided by the Department of Education and then, in February, led a three-hour workshop one day after school to train the other members of the department to use the four-point scale. This workshop included the Special Education teachers because their students would also be submitting portfolios (even though these teachers would not be involved in the actual scoring of senior portfolios), and the principal, and a curriculum director from the district office. These last two men had been invited by the English teachers, who were hoping to convince the administration that they would need some release time to score the portfolios. During the workshop the teachers worked with the scoring guides and bench-mark portfolios provided by the Department of Education. They spent considerable time translating the terminology of the rubric into their own language, so that, for instance, “minimal awareness of audience” and “purpose” and “limited idea development” came to be understood by the group as “clueless.” When one teacher questioned the need for the analytic “commendations” and “needs” evaluations for seniors who would never see the remarks or have another high school class in which the assessment might prove helpful to the teacher, another teacher replied they were needed because “We are being graded, not the students.”

As they worked with the new four-point scale, they gradually became more confident of their judgment, but all continued to express a fear that they would be “moderated” by the state and that their building would be “sanctioned” because they had failed to figure out exactly what the state wanted. Their insecurity was intensified by their belief that the inherent subjectivity at the heart of writing evaluation would lead them to “read differently than the state wants us to.”

After much time and effort, the department was given a “Professional Development Day” in March to score portfolios and a second half day to complete the suggested double scoring. In response to a Department of Education memo, the portfolios were identified by numbers rather than names, and teachers who recognized familiar work exchanged portfolios until each reader had between twenty-three and twenty-five anonymous portfolios to read as primary scorer. Even after the two days of official portfolio scoring, when each teacher spent about thirteen minutes reading

a portfolio and then exchanged portfolios to double score them, several later spent hours rereading the portfolios for which they were the primary scorer and discussing troublesome ones with colleagues in the department. One teacher, the cluster leader, served as tie breaker when primary and secondary scorers disagreed.

During scoring, the teachers frequently voiced complaints that poor quality writing or incomprehensible topics from non-English classes affected the holistic score for the entire portfolio. Most of them felt that many content area teachers either did not know how to create writing assignments or were designing “make work” specifically for the portfolio. One teacher told of a conversation with a student who had said another of her teachers had called the writing assignment he had given “dumb.” Several senior English teachers also described conversations with students who had simply created pieces of writing that could have been assigned in a class or redesigned assignments created for English classes so that they appeared to have been done for another class. One also reported that a particularly enterprising student had convinced his science teacher he did not need to do a particular writing assignment because he “already had enough” for his portfolio. The teachers also expressed concern about the authenticity of some of the portfolios they read, but generally they let their suspicions remain suspicions. They knew following up on a suspect portfolio not only would be time consuming but might lower their overall building tally since incomplete portfolios were to be scored “Novice,” the lowest possible score. All final scores had to be “bubbled in” on special sheets and signed by the teacher who was the primary scorer.

High Stakes or Authenticity

In the week following the portfolio deadline, I asked all the seniors to complete a questionnaire about their portfolio experience and interviewed sixteen students individually about their portfolios and the assembly process. Most students said they believed that the portfolio requirement had led to their writing more in their classes than they had been asked to do in previous years, and most seemed to feel this writing was done to meet portfolio requirements. Many students, especially those in the lower track English courses, indicated they had taken the portfolio requirement seriously and were very proud of the work they had assembled. Others blithely indicated they had done a perfunctory job while some of the Advanced Placement students complained that doing the portfolio required

time they needed for their “real work” and for writing college application essays. One said she did not know why teachers had made it seem like “such a big life or death deal when it really didn’t count for anything.”⁷ The teachers took all these attitudes very much to heart because they felt they were the ones being judged by the quality of the portfolios.⁸

By June of 1993 the word “portfolio” had become firmly embedded at Pine View within the growing lexicon of Kentucky Education Reform Act jargon. And just what does “portfolio” mean in this particular context? It is rapidly acquiring connotations not found in any Department of Education document. Among other things, it is a public performance required of all students every four years. It is a rule-following procedure for students and teachers that takes a great deal of time and energy. It is a reflecting and decision-making experience that teachers believe is good for students to have occasionally, but not as a part of a regular classroom routine. It is a new and stressful responsibility for English teachers. And finally, it is a part of the score that gets published in the paper for parents to see and administrators to attempt to explain. In short, it is “The Test.”

At the end of its second year at Pine View, then, the writing portfolio assessment did seem to be meeting part of the state’s goal of “encouraging more writing in the classroom” although perhaps not in quite the way the Department of Education had envisioned. Students who wished to graduate were writing and assembling at least six pieces that might have been created in response to classroom assignments. They were spending time revising, or at least recopying, papers they had written at some time preceding the portfolio assembly period or creating new pieces. Finally, some students were, often for the first time, feeling a sense of satisfaction, if not with their writing, then with meeting demanding time, form, and content requirements. By making portfolios a high stakes test for teachers, the state had succeeded in emphasizing the importance of writing and had increased the amount of writing being done. It was no longer acceptable for a senior to graduate having never written more than an occasional paragraph.

On the other hand, the second part of the goal, “encouraging more process-guided instruction,” was not faring nearly as well. Within the English department, “the writing process” was seen primarily as a way to insist on at least one revision of a paper, and teachers expected to take an active role in providing topics and in editing. Teachers outside the English department saw writing instruction in terms of providing an appropriate assignment for a potential portfolio piece early enough in the semester for the English department to help students polish it for the assessment portfolio. Finally, at least at Pine View, not all of the effects of

the writing requirement on the curriculum were positive. In an effort to "make room" for writing, valuable aspects of the current curriculum were being truncated or discarded, and effective writing assignments were being abandoned because they did not lead to pieces that seemed appropriate for the portfolios.

Further, since portfolios are currently associated with all the emotional baggage that surrounds more traditional state-mandated tests, it will be difficult for teachers to think of portfolios as anything other than a stressful experience. At present, the emphasis on portfolios as an assessment instrument does not encourage Kentucky high school teachers to explore classroom portfolios, but if they decide to do so, they may have a difficult time separating classroom activities from the tension that surrounds compiling the "real" portfolio. In fact, they may have difficulty seeing and communicating the value of any writing assignment that might not eventually be used in the assessment portfolio. Thus, if the portfolio remains, as it currently is, an instrument used to assign a numerical score to materials that have been created expressly for it, then it may succeed in requiring teachers to assign more writing and yet fail as an authentic test of authentic writing.

Notes

1. Sharon Hamilton's article "Portfolio Pedagogy: Is a Theoretical Construct Good Enough?" (*New Directions in Portfolio Assessment*, eds. Laurel Black, Donald A. Daiker, Jeffery Sommers, and Gail Stygall, Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, Heineman, 1994: 157-67) is perhaps the clearest articulation of the position that portfolios function best as a personalized pedagogy. Some of the others who support a student-centered portfolio approach are Donald Graves, Bonnie Sunstein, and most of the contributors to their volume, *Portfolio Portraits* (Portsmouth: Heineman; 1992); and Robert Tierney, Mark Carter, and Laura Desai, *Portfolio Assessment in the Reading-Writing Classroom* (Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 1991).

Those who advocate portfolios as a vehicle for grading individual proficiency within the classroom often follow the direction set by Christopher Burnham in "Portfolio Evaluation: Room to Breathe and Grow," *Training the New Teacher of College Writing*, ed. Charles W. Bridges (Urbana: NCTE, 1986) while the best-known advocates of using portfolios to assess departmental standards are Pat Belanoff and Peter Elbow who developed the portfolio program at SUNY Stony Brook and William Condon and Liz Hamp-Lyons who developed a similar program at the University of Michigan. Their guiding philosophies can be found in Pat Belanoff and Marcia Dickson, eds., *Portfolios: Process and Product* (Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1991).

In addition to Grant Wiggins, a number of other theorists are beginning to advocate using portfolio tests as a kind of preemptive strike against reliance on standardized tests. Roberta Camp of ETS suggests portfolios are the logical successors to timed tests of direct writing ("Changing the Model for the Direct Assessment of Writing," *Validating Holistic Scoring for Writing Assessment*, eds. Michael M. Williamson and Brian A. Huot Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 1993: 45-78.) And in

- “Portfolios and Literacy: Why?” Pat Belanoff describes portfolios as a way to “meet the demand for mandated testing at all levels with systems that do not undercut our teaching” (*New Directions in Portfolio Assessment*, eds. Laurel Black, Donald A. Daiker, Jeffery Sommers, and Gail Stygall, Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann, 1994: 22). Edward M. White, too, sees the value of including portfolios within the dialogue about what large-scale tests can and should do. See, for instance, “Issues and Problems in Writing Assessment,” *Assessing Writing* 1 (1994): 11-27.
2. Reform is intended to bring about sweeping changes in curriculum, governance, and finance. Some of these changes include school-based decision making, ungraded primary classes, high school restructuring, and greater use of technology. Portfolios, of course, are not the only kind of assessment being used to change curriculum. Students at the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades must also sit a battery of “transitional” tests, designed to gradually phase out multiple choice items, and engage in some new performance tasks which test their ability to solve problems and communicate their solution in writing. These test scores, plus factors like attendance rates and retention, all figure into the “accountability index” assigned to each school and become the basis for figuring improvement or lack of improvement. For an explanation of the reform act’s provisions, see Legislative Research Commission, *A Citizen’s Handbook: The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990* (Frankfort, KY: 1994).
 3. Grant Wiggins has written extensively about how well-designed tests can enhance teaching and learning. Douglas Archibald and Fred M. Newmann also review the concept of authentic assessment and describe several innovative programs in *Beyond Standardized Testing: Assessing Authentic Academic Achievement* (Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988). For a cautionary response to the concept of authentic assessment, see Laurel Black, Edwin Helton, and Jeffery Sommers’s article “Connecting Current Research on Authentic and Performance Assessment Through Portfolios,” *Assessing Writing* 1 (1994): 247-266.
 4. Since so much of the system developed in Kentucky built on the work done in Vermont, Geof Hewitt’s “Vermont’s Portfolio-Based Writing Assessment Program: A Brief History” (*Teachers and Writers* 24.5 1993: 1-6) provides important background information about Kentucky’s hopes for portfolio assessment.
 5. Several researchers have written persuasively about the complex processes involved in educational change. See, for instance, Michael Fullan and Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 2nd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991); Nancy Lester and Cynthia Onore, *Learning Change: One School District Meets Language across the Curriculum* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1990); and John Mayher, *Uncommon Sense: Theoretical Practice in Language Education* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990).
 6. The original scale used five categories, with a “one” being the lowest possible score and a “five” being the highest. The new scale has four categories, each with a descriptive name rather than a number. All portfolios that received the lowest two scores on the five point scale were automatically reclassified as “Novice” by the state, all the “threes” became “Apprentice,” and all the “fours” became “Proficient,” while “fives” were called “Distinguished.” The Department of Education explained the change was made so that the portfolio evaluations would be compatible with other four-point assessment measures developed after the original portfolio scoring guide. In addition, although each portfolio still would receive a numerical score to be submitted to the state, teachers were urged to discuss and evaluate portfolios using the descriptive terms of the scoring guide.

7. This year's seniors will find that portfolios "count" more because most school districts are encouraging teachers to assign a grade value to the work done for the assessment portfolios, some are discussing "Apprentice" level competency for graduation, and several state universities are exploring ways to use senior portfolios to place incoming freshmen. The writing portfolios themselves are also evolving. Currently, in response to teacher suggestions, the Department of Education has refined the scoring guide and moved the Letter to the Reviewer from the end of the portfolio to the beginning.
8. Administrators, too, are feeling test anxiety. This past spring, newspapers carried accounts of principals providing "perks" to seniors, ranging from free breakfasts to prom tickets, if they took the transitional multiple choice segments and open-ended questions on the general assessment seriously. Portfolio completion was sometimes rewarded with a party.



KIRIS WRITING ASSESSMENT Holistic Scoring Guide

1992-93

NOVICE	APPRENTICE	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited awareness of audience and/or purpose • Minimal idea development; limited and/or unrelated details • Random and/or weak organization • Incorrect and/or ineffective sentence structure • Incorrect and/or ineffective wording • Errors in surface features are disproportionate to length and complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An attempt to establish and maintain purpose and communicate with the audience • Unelaborated idea development; unelaborated and/or repetitious details • Lapses in focus and/or coherence • Simplistic and/or awkward sentence construction • Simplistic and/or imprecise language • Some errors in surface features that do not interfere with communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on a purpose; evidence of voice and/or suitable tone • Depth of idea development supported by elaborated, relevant details • Logical organization • Controlled and varied sentence structure • Acceptable, effective language • Few errors in surface features relative to length and complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes and maintains clear focus; evidence of distinctive voice and/or appropriate tone • Depth and complexity of ideas supported by rich, engaging, and/or pertinent details; evidence of analysis, reflection, insight • Careful and/or subtle organization • Variety in sentence structure and length enhances effect • Precise and/or rich language • Control of surface features

Analytic Annotation Guide

CRITERIA	OVERVIEW	COMMENDATIONS	NEEDS
PURPOSE/ APPROACH	The degree to which the writer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishes and maintains a purpose • communicates with the audience 	P/A-X clear awareness of audience and purpose	P/A-J greater sense of audience and purpose
		P/A-Y original and/or insightful approach and evidence of distinctive voice/tone	P/A-K more insightful approach and evidence of voice/tone
IDEA DEVELOPMENT/ SUPPORT	The degree to which the writer provides thoughtful, detailed support to develop the main idea(s)	I/S-X perceptive thinking	I/S-J more thoughtful investment by author
		I/S-Y relevant, interesting details	I/S-K more elaboration of details
ORGANIZATION	The degree to which the writer demonstrates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logical sequencing • coherence • transitions/organizational signals 	OX evidence of planning	OJ more evidence of planning
		OY order/sequence easily followed	OK more logical sequence of ideas and effective transitions
SENTENCES	The degree to which the writer includes sentences that are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • varied in structure and length • constructed effectively • complete and correct 	SX variety in structure and length	SJ greater variety in structure and length
		SY effectively constructed sentences	SK more effective sentence construction
WORDING	The degree to which the writer exhibits correct and effective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word choice • usage 	WX successful use of pertinent and/or rich language	WJ closer attention to effective word choice
		WY control of conventional usage	WK greater control of conventional usage
SURFACE FEATURES	The degree to which the writer demonstrates correct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling • punctuation • capitalization 	SF-X spelling enhances readability	SF-J accurate spelling
		SF-Y capitalization and punctuation aid clarity	SF-K greater control of punctuation and capitalization

Appendix B

Letter to Reviewer

The Letter to the Reviewer is written by the student to discuss his/her growth as a writer and reflect on the pieces in the portfolio (grades eight and twelve) or “Best Piece” (grade four). In this letter, the student will examine such possibilities as the following:

- a description of himself/herself as a writer including
 - a) goals as a writer,
 - b) progress and growth as a writer through the year,
 - c) who or what has influenced writing progress and growth,
 - d) approaches used by the student when composing, etc.;
- selection of “Best Piece” and /or portfolio pieces including
 - a) how he/she arrived at his/her selections
 - b) role of the writing folder in portfolio selection(s)
 - c) prewriting/thinking about the topic(s)
 - d) revision strategies that were helpful,
 - e) editing strategies that were helpful,
 - d) kinds of changes made and reasons for those changes,
 - g) influence of teacher/peer conferencing;
- any other comments the student wishes to make about this year of writing

From *Kentucky Writing Portfolio: Teacher's Handbook*, Thomas C. Boysen, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Assessment and Accountability, 1992 to 1993.