

Learning as a Continuum

Submitted by Tandy Gunn – Nanoose Bay Elementary School

British Columbia curriculum is being transformed, and so is the teaching that accompanies the redesign. This year Kindergarten-Grade 9 teachers have had a year to explore our redesigned curriculum. Next year we will begin full implementation of the redesigned curriculum. How is curriculum changing you might ask? Here are some of the points on the Ministry website that address this question:

The curriculum redesign aims to:

- reduce the prescriptiveness of the existing curriculum while ensuring a consistent focus on the essential elements of learning.
- allow teachers and students the flexibility to personalize the learning experience to better match each student's individual strengths and needs.
- balance the foundational skills that students need to learn with the "big ideas" or concepts that they need to understand to succeed in their education and their lives.
- support development of critical thinking, communication skills, and personal and social competence.

One major goal is that all learners will be better prepared for their adult lives when they leave high school, no matter what path they choose. There is an emphasis on real-life experiences, community involvement, gaining business knowledge and hands-on learning as well as Core Competencies such as critical and creative thinking, communication, personal and social identity and responsibility. All the while, ensuring students have fundamental literacy and numeracy skills.

We know that:

- Learning requires active participation of the student.
- People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.
- Learning is both an individual and a group process.

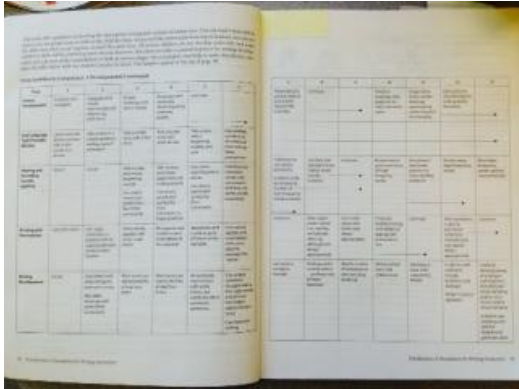
Learning is a continuum. Our work is to keep each person moving forward on the continuum. This year we worked with our student teachers from Vancouver Island University to develop a writing continuum. Our goal was to show the progression of emergent through to fluent pre-adolescent writers and to provide a concrete example as well as a descriptor of what the author demonstrated at each stage of writing.

In the fall, all students wrote a piece based on the prompt "My Perfect Day". Student writing was roughly grouped into emergent, developing and fluent. Student teachers were given an emergent writing continuum (from "[What's Next for this Beginning Writer](#)") and the BC Performance Standards and were asked to select possible exemplars of each stage in writing.

Quick Scale: Grade 7 Personal Writing

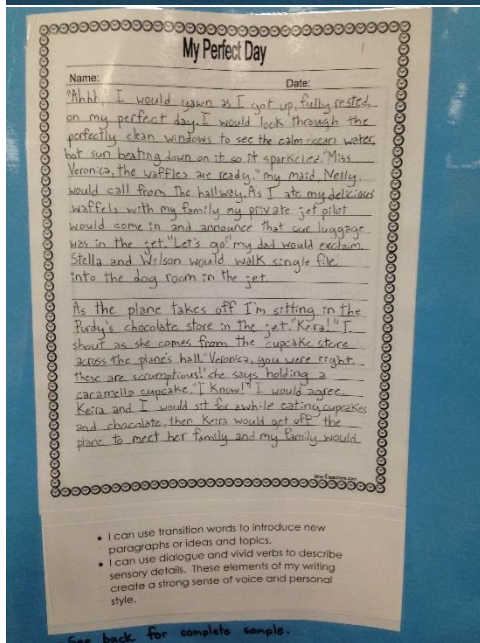
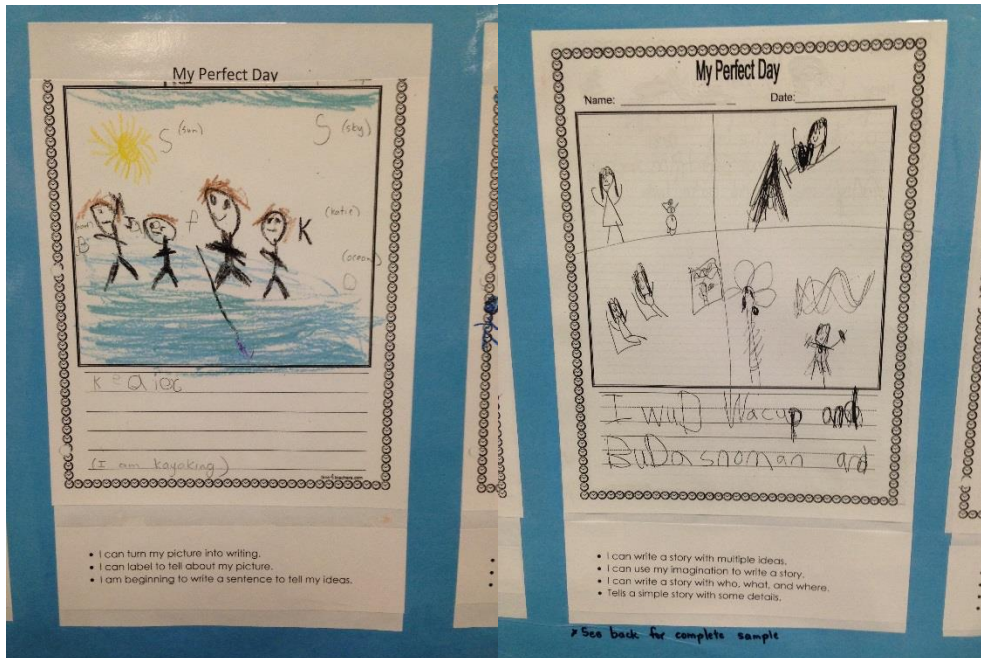
The Quick Scale is a summary of the Rating Scale that follows. Both describe student achievement in March-April of the school year. Personal writing is usually expected to be checked for errors, but not revised or edited.

Aspect	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
SNAPSHOT	The writing consists of loosely connected ideas; often includes serious errors.	The writing is somewhat general, but completes the basic task; may be flawed by errors.	The writing is clear, with some insight and development.	The writing is expressive, with some sophistication or complexity.
MEANING • ideas and information • use of detail	• purpose or point of view unclear • relies on retelling or listing • ideas are not developed; information may be misinterpreted	• relevant reactions and ideas • straightforward and direct • uses details and examples; some may be inaccurate	• reactions and ideas with some insight • may speculate, generalize • accurate details, examples; logical explanations	• some insight and originality • often uses humour or comparisons • details, examples, and explanations develop analysis or arguments
STYLE • clarity, variety, and impact of language	• simple, repetitive language • short, simple sentences	• some descriptive or expressive language • variety of sentence lengths; repeats simple patterns	• clear and varied language • variety of sentence lengths and patterns	• language is varied for effect; some precision • flows smoothly; variety of sentence structures
FORM • opening • organization and sequence • conclusion	• weak introduction; abrupt conclusion • sequence may be confusing	• Introduction is often effective; middle and end undeveloped • "stream of consciousness"	• often starts strong, then develops in predictable ways • logical sequence and connections	• strong opening; well-defined middle and end • logical sequence and connections; effective paragraphing
CONVENTIONS • complete sentences • spelling • punctuation • grammar (e.g., agreement, verb tense)	• frequent errors in simple words and structures • no control of sentence structure; often runs on	• some errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar that do not interfere with meaning • may include some run-on sentences	• may include errors in complex language, but these do not interfere with meaning • most sentences are correctly constructed	• may include occasional errors in complex language, but these do not affect meaning • sentences are correctly constructed

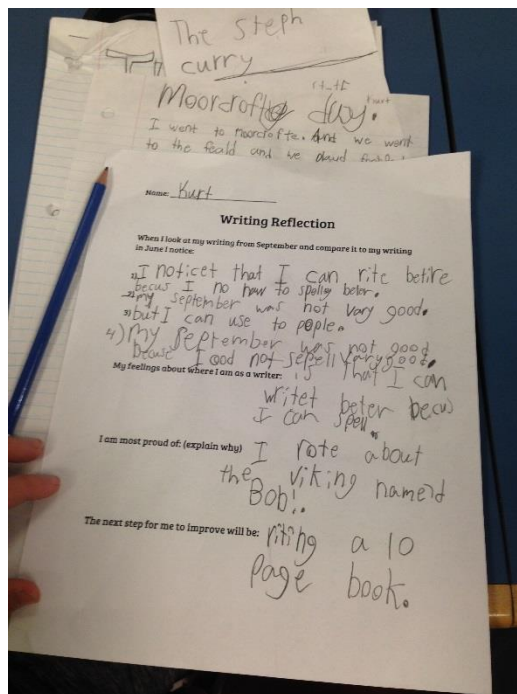
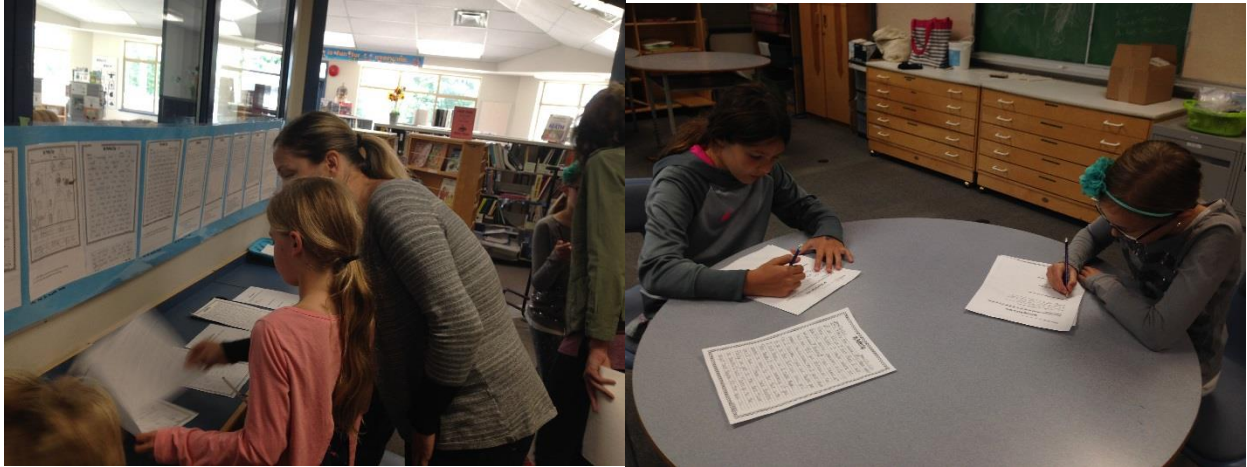


Then student teachers and teachers discussed the selections and moved, removed, replaced exemplars as needed. Then we worked to create "I can" statements for each exemplar describing what the author was demonstrating in each sample. These I can statements are cumulative. So if a writer is on the 6th exemplar of the continuum, we would expect that the "I can" statements on previous writing samples are also evidenced.





Once the continuum was constructed - the real fun began! Teachers began taking students to learn how the continuum could help them in their development as a writer. Students brought writing samples and 'found' where they believed they were on the continuum. They discussed with peers and teachers why they thought they were at that stage and then looked to the next exemplar to gain insight as to their next step as a writer. Self and peer reflection and goal-setting with descriptive feedback built in!



The thoughtful observations students of all ages made were stunning. Teachers began collaborating with each other about how they were incorporating the continuum into their practice and we were humbled to once again acknowledge – we’re all on a continuum. I am so proud of the collaborative work teachers at Nanoose Bay elementary engage in and the willingness they show to continue to move along their continuum of learning and to support learners of all ages in doing the same.

For more information on the changes to the curriculum please go to:

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>

The FQA sheet at <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/fag.pdf> is quite a concise summary of the major changes.