

## Understanding Provincial Achievement Standards in Reading and Writing

Helping your child to be successful



Now that your child has fully made the transition to middle school, he or she is maturing as a reader and writer. As a parent, you can continue to be a source of support and encouragement while respecting his or her independence.

### Recognize the signs of a successful writer.

Teachers use six features to identify strengths in a piece of writing, and the Provincial Achievement Standards describe appropriate and strong writing in each of these for the end of Grade 7. The excerpt from *Boat Trip* on the opposite page is an example of an appropriate piece of writing by a student at the end of Grade 7.

**Content** includes the topic, focus, ideas and details of the piece of writing. In *Boat Trip*, for example, the writer has chosen to write about the MacDonalds' boating trip, and enhanced the ideas by including details such as the raincoats and what they ate.

**Organization** involves the form of the writing (letter, story, report, etc.) and the order and grouping of ideas. The story *Boat Trip* unfolds in a way that is easy to follow, with the setting and characters introduced at the beginning and the events presented in a logical sequence. Each paragraph contains related ideas.

**Word Choice** concerns the vocabulary and language that is used. The writer of *Boat Trip* used descriptive words (sticky and weary), technical phrases (changed its course) and figurative language (clear as glass).

**Voice** shows that the writer cares about the topic and is able to engage the reader. The reader gets a sense of the writer's feelings and personality. In *Boat Trip*, several phrases show voice (decided to go for it, looking a little weary, and turned the boat and put the throttle at full speed).

**Sentence Structure** relates to the kinds, structures, lengths and beginnings of sentences that are used. In *Boat Trip*, a variety of complex sentence structures is used (After they had been going ..., they stopped just off an island for a swim. They swam for a while before they had some hotdogs and hamburgers).

**Conventions** include spelling, punctuation and grammar. The writer of *Boat Trip* spelled almost all words correctly and used internal punctuation, such as commas and quotation marks.

### You can be involved in building your preteen's writing skills.

#### Before Writing

Invite your child to talk with you about the writing assignment and how the topic connects to your child's own experiences. If your child is having trouble getting started, suggest that she or he try listing ideas, making an idea web or brainstorming before beginning the first draft.

#### During Writing

This is a time to encourage independence. You can help by keeping the environment as free from distractions as possible.

#### After Writing

Be available to offer feedback and suggestions. Always begin by pointing out the strengths in the writing, referring to specific details. Help your preteen focus first on checking the ideas and organization of the piece prior to revising for voice, word choice and sentence structure. Lastly, encourage your child to read the piece aloud and to make her or his own corrections to punctuation, spelling and grammar.

#### Boat Trip

It was one of the finest days of the year. There was a small breeze, the sun was shining and the water was clear as glass.

The MacDonalds were preparing for their big boating trip they were going to go on. Although they never owned a boat they hired a man named Fred to take them out for the day.

Everyone was just loading up the boat with food and supplies. They were just packed and ready when Fred put some raincoats on the boat because he said that they might get some sticky weather even though forecast was good.

It was know about 10:30 and they were just leaving from the place where they lived called Machias, Maine. This was very exciting to Brian and his sister, who had never been on a boat before except for a ferry. After they had been going for about three hours, they stopped just off an island to swim. They swam for a while before they had some hotdogs and hamburgers.

The weather was starting to get rougher by now and there were some clouds starting to move in. Their boat was still going out to sea, when Fred was sent a message saying that hurricane Barbara had changed its course and it was heading straight for them. Fred, who was a very calm person, came out and told them that their best bet was to go straight for a small town called Sandy Point or they could go straight for home, but it would be hard to say if they would make it in time. None of the MacDonalds wanted to stay in a different town with no money for the whole night. So they decided to go for it. "Very well then," said Fred looking a little weary. He turned the boat, and put the throttle at full speed.

One hour later

It had started to rain and the wind was rattling the windows.

Thirty minutes later

The waves were so big that they had almost capsized when the anchor fell off the side of the boat. Brian's dad went out to cut the rope because the current was to strong to hale it back in when a huge wave came and knocked him overboard. Brian's uncle had seen what happened and jumped in to save Brian's dad.

That was the last anyone ever seen of the two. As for the rest they all made it back home. After capsizing the boat and staying together and floating around until they were picked up by a helicopter. This was their first and most likely their last boat trip.

## Writing Revision Checklist

### Content

- I selected a topic with a main idea.
- I included straight forward and predictable ideas and events.
- I supported my ideas with effective details.

### Organization

- I used my introduction to let my readers know what I will be writing about.
- I put my ideas in a logical order and organized them into paragraphs.
- I included an obvious conclusion.

### Word Choice

- I included precise words and/or technical language.
- I included descriptive words (adjectives, adverbs, strong verbs, strong nouns).

### Voice

- I made my reader interested in my topic.
- I showed that I care about my topic.
- I included personal feeling, energy and individuality.

### Sentence Structure

- I included different kinds of sentences, both simple and complex.
- I included a variety of sentence lengths and beginnings to make my writing interesting.

### Conventions

- I used correct end punctuation and capitalization.
- I included internal punctuation(commas, quotation marks, apostrophes).
- I used correct spelling.
- I used correct verb tenses, subject-verb agreement and pronouns.

Tear off this handy checklist for your child. He or she will recognize the traits of good writing and the reading strategies from school. They will support your child's reading and writing skill development.