

# Placement

## Placing students

There are four options for placing students in *Expressive Writing*:

1. *Expressive Writing 1*, lesson 1
2. *Expressive Writing 2*, Preprogram lesson 1
3. *Expressive Writing 2*, lesson 1
4. *Expressive Writing 2*, lesson 1, accelerated schedule

Some students should be placed in material more sophisticated than *Expressive Writing 2*.

## General Criteria for Placement

As a general rule, if students write in a manner that lacks coherence (you can't follow what they are trying to say), if it's difficult to identify sentences, and if their passages have serious language mistakes, students should be placed in *Expressive Writing 1*. If students write in a manner that demonstrates coherence, and if much of what they write can be transformed into acceptable writing by correcting punctuation, they may be placed in *Expressive Writing 2*.

Most students in grades 4 and above who have had previous writing instruction will place in *Expressive Writing 2*. The majority of students who place in *Expressive Writing 1* will be English-language learners who lack understanding of English vocabulary and structure. Their writing is characterized by mistakes in singular-plural, noun-verb agreement, tense, punctuation, and by sentences that don't make sense. In contrast, students who place in *Expressive Writing 2* write coherently, although they may make a variety of mistakes.

## The Placement Test

The following sections provide more specific indications about the characteristics of students who place in: *Expressive Writing 1*, *Expressive Writing 2* Preprogram, *Expressive Writing 2* regular program and *Expressive Writing 2* accelerated schedule. The criteria are illustrated by samples of student writing. All the examples are responses to the placement test. The samples don't start with the first part of the students' narratives because this part involves a great deal of copying. Directions for the placement test appear below. Each student will need a copy of the placement test Blackline Master (found on page 37), lined paper and a pencil.

Ray, Mario and Lisa stood on the deck of the boat.				
anchor coins	face mask diving equipment	air tank dove	pressure exclaimed	jewels sharks

### Directions for Placement Test:

1. Look at the pictures. You're going to write a story that tells what happened. You'll begin your story with the sentence in the first box. That sentence says: **Ray, Mario and Lisa stood on the deck of the boat.**
2. The first picture shows what happened at the beginning of the story. The second picture shows how the story ended. Lots of things must have happened between the first picture and second picture.

c. I'll read the words in the vocabulary box below the pictures: anchor, face mask, air tank, pressure, jewels, coins, diving equipment, dove, exclaimed, sharks. Be sure to spell those words correctly if you use them in your passage.

d. I'll make up a beginning to the story.

Ray, Mario and Lisa stood on the deck of the boat. They looked at a map. They were getting ready to search for a sunken treasure. Mario said, "I hope we find the treasure."

Lisa said, "People say the treasure is worth a fortune." The divers put on their diving equipment and stood by the side of the boat.

e. Start with the sentence in the box that tells what Ray, Lisa and Mario did and write an interesting story. Tell what the characters did and what they said. Be sure to tell all the important things that must have happened between the pictures. You have 20 minutes.

f. (After 20 minutes, collect the students' papers.)

## Placement Guidelines

### 1. Placement in *Expressive Writing 1*

Below are parts of four passages written by students who need the training in and understanding of usage provided by *Expressive Writing 1*.

#### Example 1

... So Ray put the anchor so the boat want move anywhere else. So they look at the map to find it and then they dove and then they was underwater fro about 15 minute finding the treasue and Mario fund it so they took it up to the boat.

#### Example 2

... When Ray was swimming with Mario. Ray hit his back on the treasure. So Lisa wint to Mario and Ray everybody carry the treasre up and then Lisa use a anchor to open the treasure. Then it dove open coins and diamonds, rubies pop open when they took out the jewels they seen necklaces and perls stook on the bottoms of the treasure...

#### Example 3

... Ray Mario an Lisa stood on the deck of the boat took out the diving equipment and dove in the water an they seen a big anchor hook on a treasure box soon as they put the treasure box here come sharks they pull the big anchor up to the water the sharks brock the lock and they didn't now the lock was brocke when they was about to thow it back in the water...



#### Example 4

... They were so happy they swim up the water. Until they seen a sharks they flow up the water got in to the boat the sharks was still swimming around the boat But Lisa and ray wasn't paying no mine's at the shark but they was looking at the treasure. Mario was looking at the sharks until Lisa said come on Ray we have treasure...

Note that in all these examples, the number of different kinds of mistakes makes it unlikely that it would be possible to correct all or most of them without overloading the students with information. Note also that these passages indicate the students' lack of understanding of basic English-language conventions and vocabulary. Making any of these passages acceptable requires replacing many words with others that are more appropriate for what the student apparently tried to convey and restructuring the text so it presents acceptable sentences.

Write an interesting story. Use lined paper.

- Start with the sentence in the first box.
- Tell what the characters did and what they said.

<p>Ray, Mario and Lisa stood on the deck of the boat.</p>		
<p>anchor coins</p>	<p>face mask diving equipment</p>	<p>air tank dove jewels sharks</p>

## 2. Placement in *Expressive Writing 2*, Preprogram

The preprogram contains ten lessons that appear before regular lesson 1 in *Expressive Writing 2*. The preprogram teaches students to write and punctuate a passage with regular-order sentences and to avoid the use of run-on sentences.

The general rule about students who place in the preprogram of *Expressive Writing 2* is that their writing is basically sequential and coherent. They tend to make mistakes in punctuating sentences, maintaining the same tense, expressing correct subject-verb agreement and using acceptable vocabulary. These mistakes aren't as frequent as they are for the students who place in *Expressive Writing 1*. As a rule, students who place in the preprogram for *Expressive Writing 2* tend to make the same kind of mistake repeatedly, which makes their work easier to correct. They may start sentences without capitals, write run-on sentences and begin sentences with *and*, *and then* or *so*. However, much of their writing could be corrected by teaching them a few rules or conventions that they currently haven't learned. In other words, the teaching required to prepare these students to begin lesson 1 of *Expressive Writing 2* is much less than for the students who place in *Expressive Writing 1*.

Below are four passages written by students who would place in the preprogram for *Expressive Writing 2*.

### Example 1

... They looked at the map carefully and went to find the treasure. They were looking for the treasure and they felt something hard. It was the treasure. The treasure was neaby it was a hard to get it to the boat. Their was sharks all over. They finally got to the boat. They opened

the treasure. Their was lots of things Lisa found a crown she look at it and she said this must be from a queen. Ray was looking in the treasure and Mario was looking at the sharks sorrrounding the boat.

### Example 2

... Ray, Mario and Lisa stood on the deck of the boat. They turned the anchor of the boat so they can leave. They went far into the ocean. They found the spot they put on their face mask and their other diviing equipment they dove into the water. But there were sharks everywhere around the treasure. Lisa was scaring the sharks away while Mario and Ray where getting the treasure. They got it on the boat they opened it there were lots of things.

### Example 3

... They put there face mask and there air tanks on and lower the anchor and dove into the water. Then they seen the treasure and the pressure of the water started to put pressure on there air tanks. So they grabbed the treasure and swam up the surface of the water. And then a whole bunch of sharks came and Mario, Lisa and Ray swam faster, Ray and Lisa got into the boat safely but Marios diving suite got torn by a shark and then Mario got into the boat. They openend the treasure chest they seen jewels, gold coins, and neclases. They rasied the anchor and set back to the docks...

### Example 4

... Then Mario says "Let's go" So they hook up there air tanks and dove. While they are down in the water they see some sharks and lots of fish they start to swim a little faster to get away from the sharks. And then Lisa say's "I see it I see the treasure" "follow me Lisa says. Then mario and Ray pick up the treasure and start to swim off. And they get to the boat two minutes before there airtanks's run out. They hop on deck. Mario say's "Look at all those sharks as he is looking at the water."

### 3. Placement in *Expressive Writing 2*, Regular Program, Lesson 1

The following passages are written by students who would place in *Expressive Writing 2* at regular lesson 1. These students tend to be able to tell a story, although their story may have parts that are repetitive and details that are vague. The students mark nearly all their sentences with a capital and a period. Even those sentences that are not marked tend to be easily identified as sentences. The students may have problems with tense, verb agreement, vocabulary usage and spelling, particularly homophones like *their* and *there*. However, what sets these students apart from those who place in the preprogram is that their writing is not only coherent, but it has a relatively lower rate of mistakes. The students have less to learn than those who place in the preprogram.

Students who place in *Expressive Writing 2* at lesson 1 may have difficulty punctuating sentences with quotations, sentences that begin with phrases or clauses and sentences that include a series of events or names. These are not serious problems because *Expressive Writing 2* teaches students how to punctuate these types of sentences.

#### Example 1

... Just then, Lisa shouted I found something. Mario, and Ray looked and looked to see what she found. Oh, look it's a crown Ray said. So they dug for more treasure. They found jewels, diamonds and coins. They kept digging until the next morning. So around 7:45AM the next morning they found more things than they really needed. They gathered there dividing equipment and steered the boat all the way back to where they needed to go...

#### Example 2

... They saw the ship and went to it. Before they could get to the boat a octopus appeared from no were Lisa was so scared. Ray told Lisa to move. All of a sudden Lisa took off swimming to the other side of the ship. "Watch out Ray said." The octopus chased her. Then Ray chased after the octopus. The octopus couldn't find Lisa and Ray couldn't find the octopus. So Ray just went in. Then he saw Lisa swim into the back hole. They saw all different kind of fish down in the ship.

#### Example 3

... The crew put on there diving equipment there air tanks and face masks. Then they dove under the water. They saw sharks and other kinds of fish. Then they found the treasure. They took it back up to the boat. They looked inside the treasure chest. They saw lots of valuabl things. Lisa found a crown She said This is beautiful.

### 4. Placement in *Expressive Writing 2*, Accelerated Schedule

Students whose writing demonstrates a more sophisticated use of language, broader vocabulary, more sentence forms and more detail may not need to go through all the lessons in *Expressive Writing 2*. In some cases, these students may not learn as much from *Expressive Writing 2* as they would from a more sophisticated writing program, such as *Reasoning and Writing Level D*. If they are placed in *Expressive Writing 2*, they should ideally begin at lesson 1 and skip every other lesson, finishing the program in twenty-five periods. The program will clarify some conventions they may not understand well and give them useful practice in expressing themselves succinctly.

Here are passages by three students who could be placed either on an accelerated schedule in *Expressive Writing 2* or in a more sophisticated writing program.

### Example 1

... They dove into the water and sunk into the deep until they disappeared. They had forgotten to put the anchor down in the water. Under the water everything looked pitch black so it was a good thing they remembered to bring flashlights. Also the pressure underneath the water was tougher and heavier. They separated themselves but not too much so they wouldn't get lost. Mario felt something on the floor and called Ray and Lisa to come help. They had found the treasure.

### Example 2

... At last Ray, Mario and Lisa had there diving equipment ready. They prepared themselves for the freezing cold water.

The first one to go in was Lisa. Lisa swam around for a minute or two to get used to the water. Finally she was ready. Second was Mario. He put on his face mask and jumped in. Ray did the same as Lisa so he could get used to it as well. Last was Mario. Mario jumped in but as soon as he dove in he had a really bad feeling.

Ray set his navigator to the point where the treasure was known to be. They swam to the spot. Mario suggested, "Maybe we should back to the boat for safety."...

### Example 3

... When they dove into the water they came across many different sharks. One of them almost got Mario. They also saw many beautiful fish. Finally they found what they went after. The treasure. It was very hard to open because of the pressure. When they opened it they found amazing and beautiful things. They exclaimed, "Wow." There were vases full of jewels, necklaces with pearls, and rubies. They also found coins from the old times. When they finally climbed up on the boat they continued admiring the jewels. This treasure made them very rich and famous. It was hard to get it but it was worth it.

## Grouping Students for Instruction

The ideal grouping for students would be homogeneous, with the groups for *Expressive Writing 1* or *Expressive Writing 2* Preprogram not including more than fifteen students. Groups for *Expressive Writing 2* regular lessons may be as large as twenty-five students. However, the realities of scheduling and number of students per class may make it impossible for you to achieve ideal grouping. You may have one period to work with students who vary greatly in skill. Try to follow these guidelines:

- Don't group *Expressive Writing 1* and *Expressive Writing 2* students together. You will have to spend far too much time working with the *Expressive Writing 1* students.
- You can group students who place in the *Expressive Writing 2* Preprogram and students who place in *Expressive Writing 2* regular lesson 1 together. Start instruction with the preprogram even though it may be too elementary for some of the students.
- If some of the students need more practice than the others, try to work with them in a smaller group several times a week for five to ten minutes while the main group does an extra assignment. During the small group session, go over those skills that the slower students have trouble mastering. Also monitor these students more closely as they write. You may want to enlist some of the higher-performing students to assist you in helping the students who have more problems.
- If you have a handful of students who can go through the accelerated sequence and you don't have time to provide them with a separate period, you might schedule them to participate with the larger group each second day. On the other day, you can provide them with extra assignments.