**The Changing Demands of On-Demand Writing**

By Janet Martin, NBCT

**What is On-Demand Writing?**

Many would-be writers dream of inspired writing sessions in some lush nature setting with ample time to tap into their creativity and allow their poetry or best selling novel to flow out of their creative mind. However, most writing isn’t afforded ample opportunities for revision and feedback. Most writing, whether done for education, employment, or enjoyment, is written to meet some a time-sensitive demand.

On-Demand writing is any writing that is done independently within a limited amount of time, with limited resources, and for a real-world or simulated real-world purpose and form. Forms of on-demand writing include but are not limited to emails, letters, speeches, editorials, articles, blogs, social media posts, and memos.

**Why is On-Demand Writing Important?**

Much of the writing students do in their school, professional, and personal lives will be On-Demand with limited drafts, feedback, and time. Clive Thompson in his book *Smarter Than You Think: How Technology is Changing Our Lives for the Better* claims, “Every day, we collectively produce millions of books' worth of writing. . . .Altogether, we compose some 3.6 trillion words every day on email and social media—the equivalent of 36 million books,” more than the entire library of congress.

It is important for students to be exposed to On-Demand writing situations since this is a skill that is useful for college, career, and personal writing. Brooklyn 7th Grade English teacher Sarah Goodis-Orenstein sees on-demand writing assessments as “a gift.” Because it “teach[es] students to learn how to think on their toes… readying them for the pace of 21st-century workplaces.”

In addition to On-Demand writing being a useful skill to prepare students for college and career readiness, on-demand writing is a key component of assessing a student's genuine writing abilities since it is done without direct influence from teachers, parents, peers, or technology. Deborah Bell states that, “on-demand assessment impacts student performance in numerous venues: SAT and ACT Writing Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, AP Literature and Composition Test, high school and college essay exams, and writing for audiences outside the parameters of the school.” Students who improve their on-demand writing skills not only broaden their educational and career opportunities, they are improving the likelihood that they will score well on a variety of writing assessments as well.

**How did On-Demand Writing become part of state assessments in Kentucky?**

In the early 1990s, education in Kentucky underwent a massive transition due to KERA, the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act. Gone was the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and in were Kentucky’s own tests, portfolios, and On-Demand writing--the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System--KIRIS. As with any change, it was scary to some--what would this new accountability system mean for students, for teachers, for schools? On the other hand, some were excited about Kentucky being on the forefront of educational reform. For once, we were not at the bottom of the reports about education, we were being lauded as a leader in cutting-edge education and accountability practices.

**What Was On-Demand?**

Prior to 2009, On-Demand writing was an assessment administered to students in grades 4, 8, and 12 (later changed to 4, 7 & 12), a means for assessing student writing done without the aide of any outside influences beyond a dictionary and thesaurus. Students could expect a prompt that specified purpose to narrate, persuade, or inform through and specified a form of writing--either a speech, article, letter, or editorial and for a stated audience. 1 prompt was a direct prompt and the other was a passage-based prompt. Both were scored with the Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric and both were transactive. Students had 60 minutes per prompt, but were allowed as much extended time as needed in order to complete each task.

Despite the massive changes to educational assessment and writing instruction across the state, after nearly 20 years under the new system, improvements in student performance were less than stellar. A 2007 NAEP writing study showed the average score for 8th grade students was 151, only 2 points higher than the 149 reported 5 years earlier in the 2002 NAEP study, which according to Deborah L. Bell are both below the nation’s public school average. Bell goes on to report that according to 2009 KDE KCCT Test Files, the proficiency rate capped in 2009 at 34.97%-- “far from the 100% mandated proficiency score.”

On-Demand writing was originally assessed using the same rubric as the Writing Portfolios. A holistic score given to determine Novice, Apprentice, Proficient, and Distinguished. The scoring was changed

**What Happened to Change On-Demand?**

In what was a shock to many, 19 years after KERA,​ “Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), enacted in the 2009 Kentucky General Assembly,” states the KDE website, “require[d] a new public school assessment program beginning in the 2011-12 school year,” and thus K-PREP was born. In one stunning move, out were the writing portfolios that students were within days of finalizing for school-wide accountability for 2009, and in was a modified version of On-Demand assessments administered for the 2 decades before. Also out was KDE’s best system for implementing training for writing instruction and assessment, the KDE Regional Writing Consultants and the District Cluster leaders--a train-the-trainer system that allowed the modifications and improvements to the writing program to be taught to district representatives who then duplicated that training for the teachers in their districts.

**What is the On-Demand Assessment Now?**

After 2009, On-Demand assessments are administered to grades 5, 6, 8, 10, and 11 for accountability. Students are still expected to write their responses without the aide of any outside influence other than a dictionary and thesaurus; however, the form of writing is less important than the mode of writing. Instead of 4 forms of writing for students to be familiar with, the prompt could specify any form of writing. Their mode of writing varies between Narrative, Opinion, and Informative/Explanatory for 5th grade and Narrative, Argumentative, and Informative/Explanatory for 6th, 8th, 10th, and 11th grades.

Part A of the on-demand assessment is to pick 1 prompt from 2 provided and write a response on no more than 2 pages in 30 minutes for 5th grade and 40 minutes for all other assessed grades. Part B of the assessment is 1 passage-based prompt that all students are to write on no more than 4 pages and allowed a maximum of 90 minutes to complete. “Only students with the appropriate IEP, 504 Plan or PSP are permitted extended time during the test session” (“2016”).

**On-Demand Basics for 5th Grade**

On-Demand Test Grade: 5th

Modes of writing: Narrative, Opinion, Informational/Explanatory

Forms of Writing: (Should be mentioned in the prompt, but form is not directly assessed)

Pre-Writing: 1 page provided in booklet Students should use their prewriting to plan and organize their

thoughts before writing their draft, but pre-writing is NOT considered for scoring.

(See [Pre-Writing Space](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/KPREPODWPreWritingSpace.doc) for more details)

Stand-Alone Prompt: 30 minutes

Student choice of 2 prompts

1 pre-writing page (not scored)

2 writing pages (scored)

Passage-Based Prompt: 90 minutes

1 prompt

1 pre-writing page (not scored)

4 writing pages (scored)

Assessed for: holistic four-point rubric, “ability to communicate effectively with an audience by

supporting complex ideas in a coherent structure.” holistic four-point rubric

Scoring: Both of a student’s 2 pieces are scored by 2 different scorers who give a score of 0-4 for

each prompt. A student’s final score is 0-16.

**Grade 5**

Novice 0-6

Apprentice 7-10

Proficient 11-13

Distinguished 14-16 [(Based on 2012-2013 Data)](http://education.ky.gov/aa/distsupp/documents/kprep%20cut%20scores%202012-13.pdf)

Student Scores are based on:

Audience & Purpose

Idea Development, Support & Counterclaims

Organization

Sentence Correctness and Variety

Word Choice

Correctness

(See [Scoring Rubric for Kentucky On-Demand Writing](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/ODWRubricv2.pdf) for more details.)

Writer’s Reference Sheet: Page included in test booklet students may refer to as they write.

(See [Writer's Reference Sheet Grades 5 and 6](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/Gr56WriteRef.pdf) for more details.)

**On-Demand Basics for 6th & 8th Grades**

On-Demand Test Grades: 6th and 8th

Modes of writing: Narrative, argumentative, informational/explanatory,

Forms of Writing: (Should be mentioned in the prompt, but form is not directly assessed)

Pre-Writing: 1 page provided in booklet Students should use their prewriting to plan and organize their

thoughts before writing their draft, but pre-writing is NOT considered for scoring.

(See [Pre-Writing Space](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/KPREPODWPreWritingSpace.doc) for more details)

Stand-Alone Prompt: 40 minutes

Student choice of 2 prompts

1 pre-writing page (not scored)

2 writing pages (scored)

Passage-Based Prompt: 90 minutes

1 prompt

1 pre-writing page (not scored)

4 writing pages (scored)

Assessed for: holistic four-point rubric, “ability to communicate effectively with an audience by

supporting complex ideas in a coherent structure.” holistic four-point rubric

Scoring: Both of a student’s 2 pieces are scored by 2 different scorers who give a score of 0-4 for

each prompt. A student’s final score is 0-16.

**Grade 6** **Grade 8**

Novice 0-5 0-6

Apprentice 6-8 7-10

Proficient 9-12 11-13

Distinguished 13-16 14-16 [(Based on 2012-2013 Data)](http://education.ky.gov/aa/distsupp/documents/kprep%20cut%20scores%202012-13.pdf)

Student Scores are based on:

Audience & Purpose

Idea Development, Support & Counterclaims

Organization

Sentence Correctness and Variety

Word Choice

Correctness

(See [Scoring Rubric for Kentucky On-Demand Writing](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/ODWRubricv2.pdf) for more details.)

Writer’s Reference Sheet: Page included in test booklet students may refer to as they write.

(See [Writer’s Reference Sheet Grades 5 and 6](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/Gr56WriteRef.pdf) for more details.)

(See [Writer's Reference Sheet Grades 8, 10, and 11](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/Gr81011WriteRef.pdf) for more details.)

**On-Demand Basics for 10th & 11th Grades**

On-Demand Test Grades: 10th and 11th

Modes of writing: Narrative, argumentative, informational/explanatory

Forms of Writing: (Should be mentioned in the prompt, but form is not directly assessed)

Pre-Writing: 1 page provided in booklet Students should use their prewriting to plan and organize their

thoughts before writing their draft, but pre-writing is NOT considered for scoring.

(See [Pre-Writing Space](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/KPREPODWPreWritingSpace.doc) for more details)

Stand-Alone Prompt: 40 minutes

Student choice of 2 prompts

1 pre-writing page (not scored)

2 writing pages (scored)

Passage-Based Prompt: 90 minutes

1 prompt

1 pre-writing page (not scored)

4 writing pages (scored)

Assessed for: holistic four-point rubric, “ability to communicate effectively with an audience by

supporting complex ideas in a coherent structure.” holistic four-point rubric

Scoring: Both of a student’s 2 pieces are scored by 2 different scorers who give a score of 0-4 for

each prompt. A student’s final score is 0-16.

**Grade 10** **Grade 11**

Novice 0-6 0-6

Apprentice 7-10 7-9

Proficient 11-13 10-13

Distinguished 14-16 14-16 [(Based on 2012-2013 Data)](http://education.ky.gov/aa/distsupp/documents/kprep%20cut%20scores%202012-13.pdf)

Student Scores are based on:

Audience & Purpose

Idea Development, Support & Counterclaims

Organization

Sentence Correctness and Variety

Word Choice

Correctness

(See [Scoring Rubric for Kentucky On-Demand Writing](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/ODWRubricv2.pdf) for more details.)

Writer’s Reference Sheet: Page included in test booklet students may refer to as they write.

(See [Writer's Reference Sheet Grades 8, 10, and 11](http://education.ky.gov/AA/distsupp/Documents/Gr81011WriteRef.pdf) for more details.)

Since 2012, some modifications have happened to the On-Demand assessments, but those changes have been subtle and not widely publicised. Although there are some resources on the KDE website, those resources are a bit sprawling in the way they are displayed online and an incomplete means for training new teachers or re-training seasoned Kentucky teachers to understand what On-Demand writing really means now. A simple web search for On-Demand in Kentucky can yield a confusing mix of past and present tools meant to help teachers teach On-Demand skills and assess On-Demand writing.

Kentucky teachers need KDE resources that are easy to understand, easy to identify as current, and easy to implement into classroom instruction. If you look on the shelves of many seasoned teachers, you’re likely to find binders of past handbooks and handouts that may no longer be relevant to the demands of state assessments. If you look on the shelves of many new teachers, you may find an absence of any On-Demand writing resources because without the Regional Writing Consultants and school cluster leaders to support the writing reforms and without a clear path to relevant information on KDE, new teachers are at a loss to know where to gather the information they need.

**What Resources Are Available?**

**What Should On-Demand Assessment Look Like?**

**Teacher advisory council Dr. Stephen Pruitt.**

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