

## ***In Common* User Guide**

*In Common* is a collection of K-12 student writing samples gathered from classrooms across the country. We hope that this bank of annotated student work will provide a foundation for analysis and discussions that lead to a deep and nuanced understanding of the Common Core Writing Standards. Below is a short explanation of how *In Common* is organized and some possibilities for using the collection.

### **Three Writing Types, Grades K-12**

At least two samples of student work (and often many more) are provided at each grade level, in each of the three writing types described in the CCSS Writing Standards. Each piece is in a separate, downloadable file, freely available for classroom use and professional development. These files are organized into three sections by writing type (argument/opinion, informative /explanatory and narrative) and by grade cluster (K-2, 3-5 and 6-12).

### **Two Subsections**

*The three writing types in In Common* are further subdivided into two subsections, “**On-Demand Writing**” and “**Range of Writing.**” Pieces from the “On Demand” section are the result of uniform prompts and can be used to highlight developmental progressions in the Standards, as well as to build an understanding of grade-specific goals and expectations. The “Range of Writing” section is designed to illustrate a breadth of student writing aligned to Common Core Standards, and to spark ideas about how writing can be integrated throughout the curriculum.

### **Understanding the File Names**

Each part of the file name contains useful information.

#### 1. First Character: Writing Type

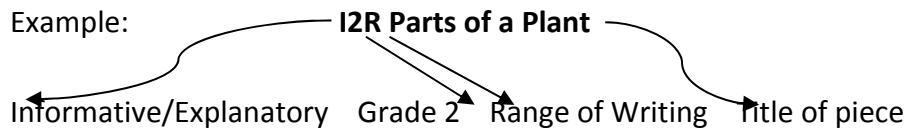
- O=**O**pinion
- A=**A**rgument
- I=**I**nformative/Explanatory
- N=**N**arrative

#### 2. Second Character: Grade Level (**K-12**)

#### 3. Third Character: Section

- **P**=Uniform Prompt
- **R**=Range of Writing

#### 4. Title of piece



This information appears in the upper left-hand corner of each piece. This coding can be used to help identify pieces in a particular writing type or grade level.

### **Different Versions for Different Purposes**

Each piece has been transcribed as the student wrote it, with the same errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation as the original. Only CCSS Writing Standards 1, 2, and 3 were considered when choosing these pieces. Mastery of conventions (addressed in the Language Standards) was not evaluated.

There are at least two versions of the same piece in each file. The first is annotated and includes commentary designed to help educators better understand how the features of the piece relate to the descriptors in the Standard. Each file also contains a version of the piece that has been transcribed, but not annotated. This version may be used for a variety of purposes, including professional development.

In addition, some primary grade pieces are accompanied by a scan of the original; this is often the case in Kindergarten where the Standard itself includes drawing, writing, and dictating.

All files in grades K-5 also contain a third version of each piece labeled, "Revised and Edited for Student Use." In this version, major errors in conventions (spelling, capitalization, etc.) have been corrected so that the piece can be used in the classroom as a model for students. Teachers may also want to refer to this edited version if the spelling errors in a transcribed piece make certain words hard to decipher.

### **Annotations**

Pieces are annotated to show their relationship to CCSS Writing Standards 1-3. Some annotations appear in the sidebars. In the sidebar annotations, **exact wording from the Standard is distinguished by bold font**. Care was taken to use the exact wording of the Standard where possible. More extensive commentary is available in a box at the end of each piece.

The student pieces in the collection were chosen with professional development (and the limited time we all have) in mind. In nearly all cases, the pieces that appear in *In Common* demonstrate every descriptor in a given Standard. This means that even a single sample piece provides ample opportunity to explore all the qualities of effective writing described in a given Standard.

## Ideas for Use

There are many ways to use these pieces, and we would love to hear new ideas on how to use them effectively. Here are some possibilities for getting started:

1. Use the Common Core Standards to annotate one of the un-annotated pieces. Discuss your observations with your colleagues, and compare them to the annotated version in the collection.
2. Analyze a span of on-demand prompted pieces in a single writing type (for example, K-5 opinion pieces) to develop a clearer understanding of the developmental progression across grade levels.
3. Use the “Revised and Edited” version of a piece as a model for students when you are teaching writing. Discuss the elements of effective writing described in the Standards. In what ways is this an effective piece? How might this piece be improved?
4. Look at a set of grade-level pieces in all of the three writing types and note the differences and similarities between the pieces. How, for example, are the argument pieces similar to the informative/explanatory pieces at your grade level? Which skills and techniques can be practiced and reinforced across writing types?
5. Compare the on-demand prompted piece at your grade level with the Range of Writing pieces. What are the similarities and differences in writing independently from a prompt and writing that stems from classroom content and instruction? What does this imply for your practice?
6. Look, across several grade levels, at the Range of Writing pieces in one writing type. Each Common Core Writing type is broad and encompasses many familiar genres. What kinds of pieces (reports, response to text, procedure, etc.) are part of informative/explanatory writing? Argument/opinion? Narrative? What does this imply for your instruction?
7. Examine a collection of Range of Writing pieces at, above, and below the grade you teach. What ideas can you get from these pieces about integrating writing and content in the curriculum?

*In Common* is designed to support educators and students by providing concrete examples of effective, Common Core aligned writing at a range of developmental levels. We hope that exploring and working with this resource in a variety of ways will deepen your understanding of the Standards, of writing, and of your students as writers.