

## 1<sup>ST</sup> HOUR ANALYSIS

### PATTERNS:

#### Writing

On Results Page 5, look more closely at the key problem area, writing. Of the students who failed the test, 68% could not be scored in the information paragraph because they either left it *blank*, the answer was *illegible or off topic*, or they did *not follow the instructions*. In addition, of those who failed the test but attempted the information paragraph, 24% performed unsatisfactorily (categories 1 and 2).

At first, it might appear that students were more successful with the summary paragraph because no papers were off topic and fewer than 21% of students *did not follow the instructions*. However, adding together the 33% of papers which were *blank or illegible*,

	Blank/ Illegible	Off Topic	Instructions Not Followed	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Summary	33 %	0 %	21 %	24 %	14 %	7 %	1 %
Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion	13 %	1 %	19 %	10 %	45 %	11 %	0 %
News Report	27 %	6 %	12 %	10 %	20 %	22 %	3 %
Information Paragraph	33 %	3 %	32 %	11 %	13 %	7 %	0 %

the 21% of students who *did not follow instructions* and the 38% of students who demonstrated unsatisfactory achievement (categories one and two), 92% of all students who wrote this test performed unsatisfactorily in these two writing areas. The information paragraph and the summary paragraph are the types of writing needing the most attention. These are key targets to address in all school programming and in test preparation.

Examine the six categories under writing on Results Page 6 (*main idea, organization*). The first problem is that high percentages (49-58%) of those who failed the writing component in each category did not produce enough work to be evaluated. While it may appear initially that reading is the key reason that the students could not write the answers (e.g., when students can't read the question they cannot do

	Percentage in Each Category of Those Who Failed the Writing Component			
	Weak Work in Most or All Pieces of Writing	Work Varied Across Pieces of Writing	Work Met Requirements in Some or All Pieces of Writing	Insufficient Work to Mark this Characteristic
Main idea	9 %	16 %	25 %	49 %
Supporting details	18 %	18 %	15 %	49 %
Organization	8 %	23 %	20 %	49 %
Tone (i.e., use of language appropriate to the purpose and intended readers)	0 %	8 %	34 %	58 %
Grammar and Punctuation	6 %	11 %	25 %	58 %
Spelling	5 %	5 %	32 %	58 %

the writing as instructed) it is more often the case that many students, even stronger reading students, don't know what is meant by the question. This is not because they can't read the question but simply because they are not familiar with the terms in the question. For example, students may not have been explicitly taught the difference between, or how to write, an information paragraph or summary paragraph. In other cases, the term the teacher has been using is different than the term used in the test. This must also be addressed in the classroom, prior to the test.

If the students say they didn't know what to write, then the strategy of drilling and reviewing the various text formats (e.g., information, summary) and their characteristics is useful. Giving the students plenty of practice exercises, particularly from the EQAO samples, increases the students' comfort and confidence with each kind of writing. Although this may appear to be teaching to the test, and it is, there is nothing wrong with this. Students need to understand the various text forms and their characteristics for more than just the EQAO test.