MODES in FOCUS

Teacher-Friendly Scoring Guide for the
Conventions Trait

The conventions trait reflects mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar and usage) guides the reader through text easily.

6 EXCEPTIONAL

A. **Checking Spelling:** The writer spells sight words, high-frequency words, and less familiar words correctly. When he or she spells less familiar words incorrectly, those words are phonetically correct. Overall, the piece reveals control in spelling.

B. **Punctuating Effectively:** The writer handles basic punctuation skillfully. He or she understands how to use periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points to enhance clarity and meaning. Paragraphs are indented in the right places. The piece is ready for a general audience.

C. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer uses capital letters consistently and accurately. A deep understanding of how to capitalize dialogue, abbreviations, proper names, and titles is evident.

D. **Applying Grammar and Usage:** The writer forms grammatically correct phrases and sentences. He or she shows care in applying the rules of standard English. The writer may break from those rules for stylistic reasons, but otherwise abides by them.

5 STRONG

4 REFINING

A. **Checking Spelling:** The writer incorrectly spells a few high-frequency words and many unfamiliar words and/or sophisticated words.

B. **Punctuating Effectively:** The writer handles basic punctuation marks (such as end marks on sentences and commas in a series) well. However, he or she might have trouble with more complex punctuation marks (such as quotation marks, parentheses, and dashes) and with paragraphing, especially on longer pieces.

C. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer capitalizes the first word in sentences and most common proper nouns. However, his or her use of more complex capitalization is spotty when it comes to dialogue, abbreviations, and proper names ("aunt Maria" instead of "Aunt Maria" or "my aunt," for instance).

D. **Applying Grammar and Usage:** The writer makes grammar and usage mistakes throughout the piece, but they do not interfere with the reader's ability to understand the message. Issues that relate to agreement, tense, and word usage appear here and there, but can be easily corrected.

3 DEVELOPING

2 EMERGING

A. **Checking Spelling:** The writer misspells many words, even simple ones, which cause the reader to focus on conventions rather than on the central theme or story line.

B. **Punctuating Effectively:** The writer neglects to use punctuation, uses punctuation incorrectly, and/or forgets to indent paragraphs, making it difficult for the reader to find meaning.

C. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer uses capitals inconsistently, even in common places, such as the first word in the sentence. He or she uses capitals correctly in some places but has no consistent control over them.

D. **Applying Grammar and Usage:** The writer makes frequent mistakes in grammar and usage, making it difficult to read and understand the piece. Issues related to agreement, tense, and word usage abound.

1 RUDIMENTARY