Results of the Secondary 3 English Language TSA 2008

The Territory-wide percentage of students achieving the S.3 English Language Basic Competency in TSA 2008 was 68.9%, a slight decrease relative to the performance level of students in 2007 which was 69.2%.

Secondary 3 Assessment Design

Assessment tasks for S.3 English Language were based on the *Basic Competency (BC) Descriptors (Tryout Version) for English Language at the end of Key Stage 3 (Secondary 3)* and the *CDC Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1 – 3) 1999*. The tasks covered the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking, and were designed in accordance with the learning objectives in three interrelated strands: Interpersonal (IS), Knowledge (KS) and Experience (ES).

The S.3 written assessment consisted of three sub-papers for Listening, Reading and Writing, comprising a total of 62 items and 96 score points. Some items appeared in all three Listening and Reading sub-papers acting as inter-paper links. The duration of each Listening sub-paper was approximately 20 minutes, Reading sub-paper was 30 minutes and Writing sub-paper was 40 minutes. The oral assessment had two components, Individual presentation and Group Interaction, with eight sub-papers in total. The composition of the S.3 sub-papers is summarised in Table 7.21.

Table 7.21   Composition of S.3 Sub-papers

Written Assessment				Speaking Assessment		
Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)			Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)	
Listening	9EL1	9EL2	9EL3		9ESP1 – 9ESP8 Individual Presentation	9ESG1 – 9ESG8 Group Interaction
L5-L-1-S3BC (language features)	2 (2)	2 (2)	0 (0)			
L5-L-2-S3BC (listening strategies)	16 (16)	16 (16)	17 (17)	L5-S-3-S3BC (ideas)	8 (4)	8 (4)
L6-R-2-S3BC (reading strategies)	3 (3)	0 (0)	3 (3)			
Reading	9ER1	9ER2	9ER3	L6-S-6-S3BC (organisation)	8 (4)	0
L6-R-1-S3BC (reading strategies)	16 (16)	15 (16)	16 (17)			
L6-R-2-S3BC (extract & organise ideas)	3 (3)	3 (3)	0	L5-S-4-S3BC (vocabulary & language patterns)	8 (4)	0
L5-R-3-S3BC (language features)	2 (2)	0	2 (2)			
L5-R-4-S3BC (reference skills)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	L5-S-2-S3BC (pronunciation & delivery)	8 (4)	0
Writing	9EW1	9EW2	9EW3			
L6-W-1-S3BC (content)	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (4)			
L6-W-2-S3BC (language)	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (4)	L6-S-5-S3BC (strategies for oral communication)	8 (2)	8 (2)
L6-W-3-S3BC (organisation)	1 (2)	1 (2)	1 (2)			
L5-W-5-S3BC (features)	1 (2)	1 (2)	1 (2)			

S.3 Listening Items

Each student attempted three listening tasks in one of the three Listening sub-papers (about 22 minutes each). Depending on the content and difficulty of the task, the recordings were played once or twice. Descriptions of the listening tasks are provided in Tables 7.22 and 7.23.

Table 7.22   S.3 Listening: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L5-L-1-S3BC	Understanding the use of a range of language features in simple literary / imaginative spoken texts	2
L5-L-2-S3BC	Using an increasing range of strategies to understand the meaning of simple texts on familiar and less familiar topics which are delivered clearly and in generally familiar accents	22
L6-R-2-S3BC	Extracting and organising information and ideas from text with some degree of complexity	3
	TOTAL	27

Table 7.23 S.3 Listening: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L5-L-2-S3BC	Dialogue - *'Fashion Week'* *9EL1 - Part 1* *9EL2 - Part 1* *9EL3 - Part 1*	Multiple choice	5 (5)
L5-L-2-S3BC L6-R-2-S3BC	Radio Talk - *'What's New Today'* *9EL1 - Part 2* *9EL3 - Part 2*	Multiple choice Short answer	4 (4) 5 (5)
L5-L-2-S3BC L5-L-1-S3BC	Poem - *'Hong Kong'* *9EL1 - Part 3* *9EL2 - Part 3*	Multiple choice Short answer	5 (5) 2 (2)
L5-L-2-S3BC	Monologue - *'When I was a Boy'* *9EL2 - Part 2* *9EL3 - Part 3*	Multiple choice	6 (6)

S.3 Reading Items

Each student was required to attempt three reading tasks in one of the three Reading sub-papers. 30 minutes were allotted for the reading tasks in each of the sub-papers. Descriptions of the reading tasks are provided in Tables 7.24 and 7.25.

Table 7.24 S.3 Reading: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L6-R-1-S3BC	Using an increasing range of reading strategies to understand the meaning of texts with some degree of complexity	26
L6-R-2-S3BC	Extracting and organising information and ideas from texts with some degree of complexity	3
L5-R-3-S3BC	Understanding the use of a range of language features and other techniques to present themes, characters, experiences and feelings in simple literary / imaginative texts	2
L5-R-4-S3BC	Applying a range of reference skills for various purposes with the help of cues	1
TOTAL		32

Table 7.25 S.3 Reading: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L6-R-1-S3BC L5-R-3-S3BC	Reviews - *'The Way Home'* *9ER1 - Part 1* *9ER2 - Part 1*	Multiple choice Short answer	5 (5) 3 (3)
L6-R-1-S3BC	Poem - *'Joy of Nature'* *9ER1 - Part 2* *9ER3 - Part 1*	Multiple choice Short answer	6 (6) 2 (2)
L6-R-1-S3BC	Passage - *'Chinese Weddings'* *9ER1 - Part 3*	Multiple choice	5 (5)
L6-R-1-S3BC L5-R-4-S3BC	Passage - *'City of Life'* *9ER2 - Part 2* *9ER3 - Part 2*	Multiple choice	6 (7)
L6-R-1-S3BC	Passage - *'Cinemas'* *9ER2 - Part 3* *9ER3 - Part 3*	Multiple choice	5 (5)

S.3 Writing Tasks

Each student was required to attempt a writing task of about 150 words from one of the three Writing sub-papers. Forty minutes were allotted for the writing task in each of the sub-papers. Descriptions of the writing tasks are provided in Tables 7.26 and 7.27.

Table 7.26   S.3 Writing: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L6-W-1-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts for different purposes with relevant and generally adequate content	3
L6-W-2-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts using punctuation marks and a range of vocabulary and language patterns with some degree of appropriateness and accuracy to convey meaning	
L6-W-3-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts with adequate overall planning and organisation (including the use of cohesive devices and paragraphs, and sequencing of ideas)	
L5-W-5-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts using the salient features of a range of genres generally appropriately with the help of cues	
	TOTAL	3

Table 7.27   S.3 Writing: Item Description

Basic Competency	Item Description	No. of Items (Score Points)
L6-W-1-S3BC L6-W-2-S3BC L6-W-3-S3BC L5-W-5-S3BC	Picture Composition - My Three-day Camping Trip *9EW1*	1 (12)
	School Newsletter - School Clubs and Activities *9EW2*	1 (12)
	E-mail - Information about School in Hong Kong *9EW3*	1 (12)

S.3 Speaking Tasks

Each student was required to attempt either an 'Individual Presentation' (3 minutes for preparation and 2 minutes for assessment) or a 'Group Interaction' (3 minutes for preparation and 3 minutes for assessment). There were altogether 16 sub-papers: two sub-papers each for the Individual Presentation and Group interaction, used for four sessions that took place on two assessment days. Descriptions of the speaking tasks are provided in Table 7.28.

Table 7.28   S.3 Speaking: Distribution of Tasks

Basic Competency	Task Description	Descriptor
L5-S-2-S3BC	Individual Presentation *9ESP1 – 9ESP8*	Using a range of delivery techniques (including stress, rhythm and intonation) to convey meaning generally appropriately with the help of cues
L5-S-3-S3BC		Expressing information and ideas (including personal experiences, feelings, opinions, imaginative ideas and evaluative remarks) with some elaboration
L5-S-4-S3BC		Using a range of vocabulary and language patterns with some degree of appropriateness and accuracy to convey meaning
L6-S-5S3BC		Using formulaic expressions and a range of strategies for oral communication to establish and maintain relationships/ interaction in familiar situations
L6-S-6-S3BC		Using organising techniques generally appropriately to convey meaning
L5-S-3-S3BC	Group Interaction *9ESG1 – 9ESG8*	Expressing information and ideas (including personal experiences, feelings, opinions, imaginative ideas and evaluative remarks) with some elaboration
L6-S-5S3BC		Using formulaic expressions and a range of strategies for oral communication to establish and maintain relationships /interaction in familiar situations

Topics for 'Individual Presentation':

9ESP1 -	Different Uses of Mobile Phones
9ESP2 -	Films
9ESP3 -	Teacher at My School
9ESP4 -	Protecting the Environment
9ESP5 -	Sports in Hong Kong
9ESP6 -	Shopping in Supermarkets
9ESP7 -	My Favourite Star
9ESP8 -	Television Programmes

Topics for 'Group Interactions':

9ESG1 -	Campus Tour for Primary Students
9ESG2 -	Extra-curricular Activities for S1 Students
9ESG3 -	English Fun Week
9ESG4 -	Visit a Home for the Elderly
9ESG5 -	Ocean Park
9ESG6 -	Dragon Boat Festival
9ESG7 -	End-of-year Class Party
9ESG8 -	Mid-Autumn Festival

Performance of S.3 Students with Minimally Acceptable Levels of Basic Competence in TSA 2008

S.3 Listening

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were generally able to extract specific information, make simple inferences with contextual clues and comprehend the main ideas in spoken texts.

Specific Information

- Most students were capable of extracting specific information from spoken texts. For example, when listening to a radio programme, students understood that the discussion was about a teaching programme called KOTO. ('What's New Today'- 9EL1, 9EL3 - Part 2 Q.3)

Inference Skills and Contextual Clues

- Students were able to draw conclusions from contextual clues. When listening to a passage about a man growing up in Hong Kong, students responded correctly about his mother having to walk to the market every day. ('When I was a Boy' - 9EL2 - Part 2, 9EL3 - Part 3 Q.2)

Main Ideas

- Students were capable of comprehending the main ideas in spoken texts. For example, from listening to the poem, they knew that the writer thought that Hong Kong was a good place to visit. (Poem - 'Hong Kong' - 9EL1, 9EL2 - Part 3 Q.5).

Rhyme

- Students were able to identify rhyming words in a poem about Hong Kong. (Poem - 'Hong Kong' - 9EL1, 9EL2 - Part 3 Q.6)

S.3 Reading

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to extract specific information from reading texts as well as locate information from different text-types such as short book reviews. Students were also capable of using inference skills in passages with familiar topics.

Specific Information

- Students could extract specific information in various reading passages. For example, from two book reviews they were able to identify the reviewers, author and main character. ('The Way Home'- 9ER1, 9ER2 - Part 1 Q.1, 2 & 4).

Main Ideas

- Students were able to identify the characteristics of Hong Kong films and their audiences. ('Cinemas' - 9ER2 - Part 3 Q.4, 5)

Inference Skills

- Students could comprehend information not explicitly stated in a reading passage. Many were capable of inferring the correct answer to the question about people not worrying about getting around late at night. ('City of Life' - 9ER2, 9ER3 - Part 2 Q.4)

Rhyme

- Students were able to identify pairs of rhyming words in a poem. ('Joy of Nature' - 9ER1- Part 2, 9ER3 - Part 1 Q.7)
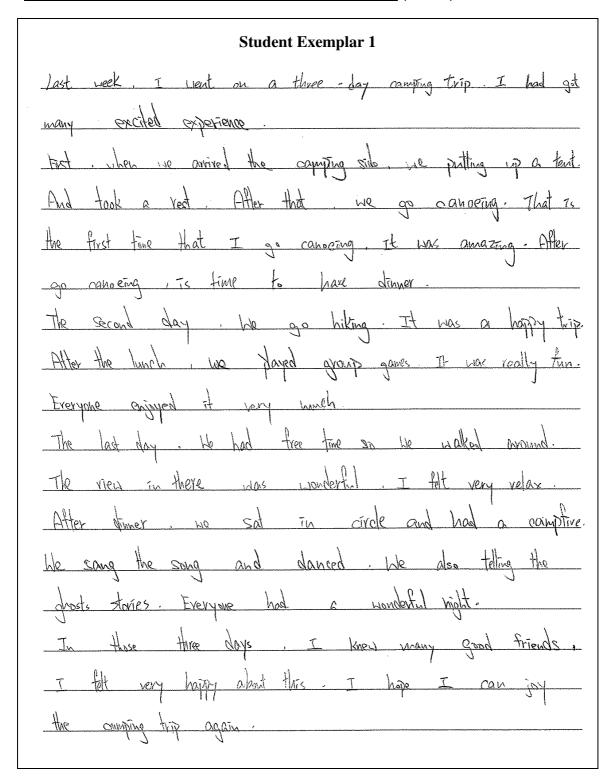
Alliteration

- Students could generally identify alliterative words in a poem when an example was given in the question. For example, in the poem, 'Joy of Nature', the question provided the example, 'It flees and flies to fields of flowers' and students were able to choose the correct response, 'It flits and floats over grassy green.' ('Joy of Nature' - 9ER1- Part 2, 9ER3 - Part 1 Q.5)

S.3 Writing

Writing assessments involved completing a writing task of about 150 words in 40 minutes. Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence in writing demonstrated the following characteristics:

- limited ideas with little or no elaboration

- paragraphs generally developed based on prompts

- the use of familiar vocabulary and simple language patterns

- errors in grammar that generally did not affect meaning

- errors in the use of tenses

- errors in spelling of commonly used words

Student Exemplar 1

Last week, I went on a three-day camping trip. I had got many excited experience.

First, when we arrived the camping site, we putting up a tent. And took a rest. After that, we go canoeing. That is the first time that I go canoeing. It was amazing. After go canoeing, is time to have dinner.

The second day, we go hiking. It was a happy trip. After the lunch, we played group games. It was really fun. Everyone enjoyed it very much.

The last day, we had free time so we walked around. The view in there was wonderful. I felt very relax. After dinner, we sat in circle and had a campfire. We sang the song and danced. We also telling the ghosts stories. Everyone had a wonderful night.

In those three days, I knew many good friends, I felt very happy about this. I hope I can joy the camping trip again.
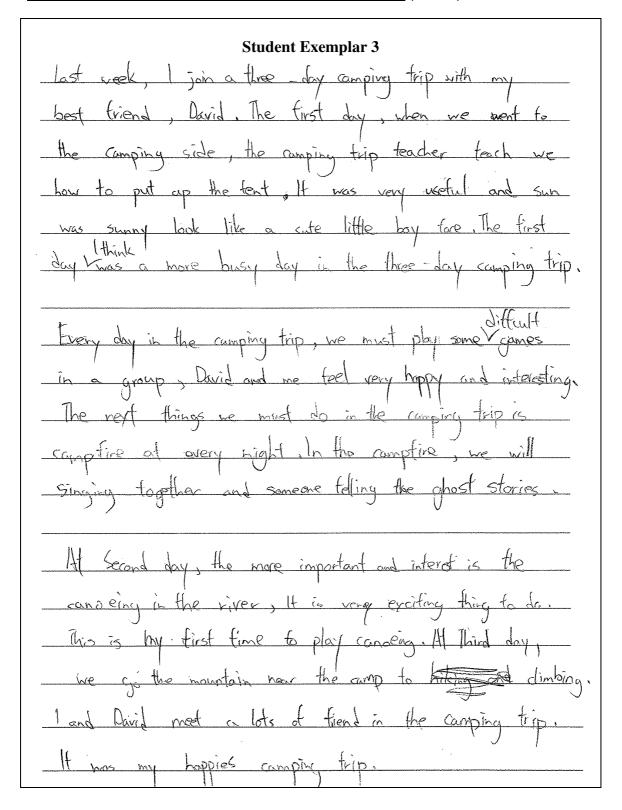
Annotation

The ideas are limited and the response lacks detail. The writing is based on the prompts with no elaboration provided. The content contains a limited range of vocabulary with some errors in grammar.

Student Exemplar 2

Hi Kathy,

At TST College... , there have 12 subject in Form 3 level, I like English very much, Mr. Wong is my favourite teacher, he teach me English, he is kind. My school have Putonghua classes. My school is one week have one test and four week have two exams. I will studies three hour at home.

In my college, you can play all ball games. If you thing you can join the volleyball team, you can join. We have two inter-school competitions. The team is very well. Singing is the most popular extra-curricular in my school. There have a school choir. If you want to join these, you can find the P.E. teacher Miss Lee to join. There have more clubs as well such as English Club and Tennis Club etc.

I hope you can come to Hong Kong next week.

Your best friend,
Elly

Annotation

The writing passage has limited ideas and very few details are expressed. The paragraphs are generally based on the email provided (question) with no further details added. The vocabulary is limited and paragraphs contain simple language patterns.

Picture composition – My Three-day Camping Trip (9EW1)

Student Exemplar 3

Last week, I join a three-day camping trip with my best friend, David. The first day, when we went to the camping side, the camping trip teacher teach we how to put up the tent. It was very useful and sun was sunny look like a cute little boy face. The first day I think was a more busy day in the three-day camping trip.

Every day in the camping trip, we must play some difficult games in a group, David and me feel very happy and interesting. The next things we must do in the camping trip is campfire at every night. In the campfire, we will singing together and someone telling the ghost stories.

At Second day, the more important and interest is the canoeing in the river, It is very exciting thing to do. This is my first time to play canoeing. At Third day, we go the mountain near the camp to ~~hiking and~~ climbing. I and David meet a lots of fiend in the camping trip. It was my happies camping trip.

Annotation

The writing passage lacks the use of proper tenses, confusing the simple present, past, and future. Paragraphs generally based on prompts with simple language patterns and some errors in grammar though meaning is not affected.

Student Exemplar 4

In the new years, our school will have many School clubs and activities. Many children also like to join Drama club, they think drama is very good than other club.

~~First~~ If you want to join the club you like. First, you sould know what interest you like, then think why you want to join the club. Some students also want to make friends to join the club. But don't forget what is your interest. However, you shald have a time to join the club, many school clubs ~~is~~ are aften the school.

School clubs is good for students. It can help you make ~~~~ many friends, learn more other things. It is ~~very~~ very good! About the activities, ~~~~ In the new years, we will have many activities, e.g: Studnt camp, Singing races, bastball races ... ... many many.

Finally, hope you enjoy In the new school ~~~~ life. If you want to have more Information, can _see the Information block.
go to

Annotation

Some relevant content is apparent with ideas expressed with a few details. Paragraphs are developed based on prompts but lacks further elaboration. The passage contains a simple range of vocabulary and language patterns.

S.3 Speaking

12 or 24 students (depending on the school size) were randomly selected from each school to participate in the oral assessment. A standard of basic competency in speaking was not set due to the relatively small sample size of students. However, a summary of the overall performance levels of students is given in the section 'General Comments on S.3 Student Performances'.

Performance of the Best S.3 Students in TSA 2008

S.3 Listening

Students with the best performance demonstrated their listening skills in the following areas:

Unfamiliar Words and Expressions

- Students were able to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions. For instance, students could correctly answer what 'Getting around is not a strain' meant in a poem. ('Hong Kong'- 9EL1, 9EL2 - Part 3 Q.2)

Inference Skills

- Students demonstrated good inference skills. For instance, they were capable of inferring that Jane liked fashion when Margaret wanted her to go to the Convention Centre with her. ('Fashion Week'- 9EL1, 9EL2, 9EL3 - Part 1 Q.4)

Details Supporting Main Ideas

- Students were capable of identifying details supporting the main idea in a conversation about the Fashion Week. They correctly answered that both local and overseas designers take part. ('Fashion Week'- 9EL1, 9EL2, 9EL3 - Part 1 Q.2)

Rhyme

- Students were competent in identifying pairs of rhyming words in a poem, such as, 'plain, train, strain, rain' and 'dine, fine, line and pine.' ('Hong Kong'- 9EL1, 9EL2 - Part 3 Q.6)

S.3 Reading

Students with the best performance demonstrated their ability in the following aspects:

Contextual Clues

- Students could identify various contextual clues in a passage and were able to make a comparison between the meanings of similar expressions, for example, 'cuisines' to 'types of food'. ('City of Life'- 9ER2, 9ER3 - Part 2 Q.2)

Unfamiliar Expressions

- Students were able to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions. For instance, students were able to respond correctly when answering questions about words/expressions like 'dart away' and 'dash'. ('Joy of Nature'- 9ER1- Part 2, 9ER3 - Part 1 Q.3 & 4)

Reference Skills

- Students could correctly identify a referent to the associated word, such as 'it' to 'Hong Kong.' ('City of Life'- 9ER2, 9ER3 - Part 2 Q.5)

Specific Information

- Students could extract information from a passage to identify a Chinese custom and answer correctly what takes place during a traditional Chinese Wedding. ('Chinese Wedding'- 9ER1 - Part 3 Q.2 & 3)

Inference Skills

- Students could deduce the meaning of information which was implicit in a poem. For example, they could infer that 'It dances away' meant that the butterfly flies away from the children. ('Joy of Nature' - 9ER1- Part 2, 9ER3 - Part 1 Q.2)

Main Ideas

- Students could identify the main idea in the book reviews. They correctly answered that the reviews were about a boy getting lost in the woods. ('The Way Home'- 9ER1, 9ER2 - Part 1 Q.3)

Gist

- Students were able to choose the best title for a poem based on its content. ('Joy of Nature'- 9ER1- Part 2, 9ER3 - Part 1 Q.8)

S.3 Writing

Students with good performances demonstrated competence in the required criteria - content, organisation, language and features when completing assessment writing tasks.

Student Exemplars 5 – 8 are written compositions that have the following characteristics:

- relevant content and ideas expressed effectively and clearly

- paragraphs developed with supporting details

- coherent links within and between paragraphs

- good range of vocabulary and language patterns

- few or no grammatical, spelling, capitalisation and punctuation mistakes

- features generally used correctly

Student Exemplar 5

In our school, we have lots of different clubs and activities which you can join and has lots of fun. First of all, let's talk about the reasons why we have to join different clubs and activities. When we join different clubs and activities, we can make friends, go on some trips, learn lots of new things and. You can learn also it will be good for your health so many new things that you could, I think it is a great experience to explore more new things.

We have lots of clubs and activities which can satisfy your wants. In computer club you can know more about Internet and how to solve some technical problems. In Drama club you can learn how to write a strip and some acting skills. In dancing club you will learn lots of graceful dance and you will have a chance to the dancing competition. In basketball club you will learn lots of skills of playing basketball, you will also have a chance to the competition with all of the Hong Kong students.

These are the most popular clubs which students want to join most. Here are some information of the four clubs that had been introduced in the last paragraph. Computer club will take place in MMLC on wednesday after school (4:00 – 5:00). Drama club will take place in the hall on Monday after school (4:00 – 6:00). Dance club will take place in dancing room on Saturday (9:00 – 12:00). Basketball club will take place in the playground on Friday after school (4:00 – 6:00). We will hold an asse. on Friday after school which will introduce all of the clubs in our school. If you want to know more about the clubs, you must join it! I hope you can choose the most suitable club which you like, as soon as possible.
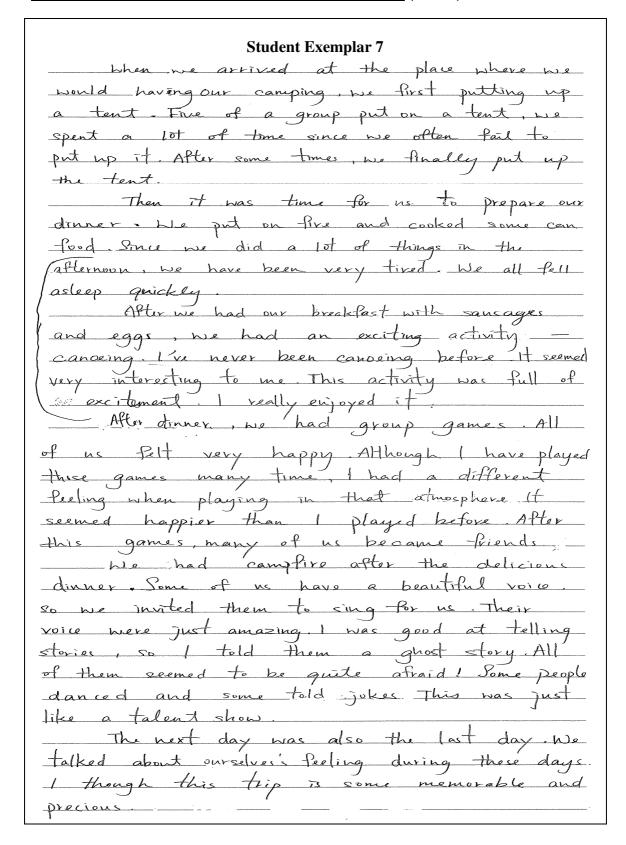
Annotation

Relevant content with ideas and details effectively expressed. The writing passage contains a range of vocabulary and language patterns with few grammatical errors.

Student Exemplar 6

Hi Kathy,

At TST College... We have about thirteen subjects at F.3 level. My favourite subject is Maths. My favourite teacher is Miss Sze who is my F.2 English teacher. Our school offer Putonghua class for each F.3 classes. Schools in Hong Kong have a lot of tests and exams, because they need to make sure whether we had already made known of the lessons. I spent almost two and a half hour for my studies.

Yes, of course our school has got volleyball team and school choir. They always perform well in the inter-school competition. We have inter-school athlete meet for sports teams and school music festival for music teams too. I think the most popular extra-curricular activities in our school is musical instrument classes. We also have other clubs as well, for example, Red Cross, Karate team, Bridge club, Dance team and etc. We have almost sixty or more clubs, you must enjoy in them. But please be remembered, each student can only choose three extra-curricular activities. If you want to join in the club, go and find the teachers who is incharge. They will ask you some questions and test for your quality two. Don't be afraid. You can do it!

I am looking forward to seeing you in Hong Kong too! By the way, do you know what class are you in? Hope that you can in the same class with me!

Love,

Elly

Annotation

Ideas are expressed effectively and paragraphs are developed with some supporting details. The writing passage contains a range of language patterns mainly accurate in grammar and ends with an effective conclusion.

Picture composition – My Three-day Camping Trip (9EW1)

Student Exemplar 7

When we arrived at the place where we would having our camping, we first putting up a tent. Five of a group put on a tent, we spent a lot of time since we often fail to put up it. After some times, we finally put up the tent.

Then it was time for us to prepare our dinner. We put on fire and cooked some can food. Since we did a lot of things in the afternoon, we have been very tired. We all fell asleep quickly.

After we had our breakfast with sausages and eggs, we had an exciting activity — canoeing. I've never been canoeing before. It seemed very interesting to me. This activity was full of excitement. I really enjoyed it.

After dinner, we had group games. All of us felt very happy. Although I have played these games many time, I had a different feeling when playing in that atmosphere. It seemed happier than I played before. After this games, many of us became friends.

We had campfire after the delicious dinner. Some of us have a beautiful voice. So we invited them to sing for us. Their voice were just amazing. I was good at telling stories, so I told them a ghost story. All of them seemed to be quite afraid! Some people danced and some told jokes. This was just like a talent show.

The next day was also the last day. We talked about ourselves's feeling during these days. I though this trip is some memorable and precious.

Annotation

Relevant content with ideas expressed with some elaboration. The writing passage contains coherent paragraphs that contain few errors in grammar and spelling. In addition, there is a range of vocabulary and language patterns that is used effectively.

Student Exemplar 8

How much do you know about our school clubs and activities? Have you join any of them I am going to tell to more about our school clubs and activities.

Our school has many different clubs and activities such as drama club, music club, computer club, girl guide. Most of our students can join them. However, there is a limit number of students for each club.

These clubs and activities usually take place in classroom after school. Some of them maybe organise on Saturday. They will have meeting once a week. Different clubs or activities are in-charged by different teachers.

You may ask why we have to join school clubs and activities. In fact, there are many advantages after joining these clubs. You may make more friends with the students from other classes as all the students can join them. You may also learn a lot of new things. Different clubs can teach you some particular knowledge and skills, for example, you may learn some music theory in the music club or you may learn some first-aid skill in the girl guide. Moreover, these clubs may organise a camp and you may learn some knowledge that cannot be learnt in the lessons. It is a very special chance.

After reading this article, I hope that you may consider deeply and join school clubs and activities. There are only benefits to you.

Annotation

The writing passage contains generally relevant content supported with ideas expressed effectively and clearly. Paragraphs are developed coherently with a good use of vocabulary and language patterns. The writing passage is mostly free of grammatical errors.

S.3 Speaking

In 'Individual Presentations', students with good speaking skills were competent in the following four areas: 'ideas and organisation', 'vocabulary and language patterns', 'pronunciation and delivery' and 'strategies for oral communication'.

- Students expressed ideas that were relevant and could explain opinions with details. They could communicate ideas clearly and coherently.

- Students were capable of using appropriate language patterns and vocabulary. They could speak clearly and fluently with few errors in pronunciation and could use intonation to enhance their presentations. They showed an awareness of their audience, maintaining good eye contact with the oral assessors.

In 'Group Interactions', students with good speaking skills were competent in conveying ideas intelligibly as well as using simple strategies for effective oral communication.

- Students could respond to relevant ideas with supporting details provided. They demonstrated a good range of vocabulary and expressed themselves clearly and fluently, with few errors in pronunciation.

- Students could use various strategies for oral communication. They were good at maintaining interaction through a range of communicative strategies, such as posing questions to elicit opinions from other group members, encouraging others to elaborate further and consolidating the group's ideas.

General Comments on S.3 Student Performances

S.3 Listening

- Students at the Basic Competency level performed well when they were required to extract specific information from spoken texts. However, they had some difficulty in identifying main ideas and details supporting main ideas.

- Students generally found inference difficult, in particular drawing conclusions about feelings and intent of the writer.

- Students generally did well on written answers though their answers contained spelling mistakes which at times made it difficult for readers to comprehend.

- Most students were able to interpret simple, factual information to fill in an information sheet.

- Many students were not capable of identifying pairs of rhymes though more capable students did not have much difficulty.

- Capable students could draw conclusions from contextual clues and comprehend the gist of certain tasks.

S.3 Reading

- Most students were capable of locating specific information from different text types.

- Many students could identify main ideas and pairs of rhyming words in a poem.

- Many of the more capable students were able to identify alliterative verse with a given example.

- Many of the capable students could interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words with contextual clues.

- Students could generally find the meaning of a phrase with a reference word.

S.3 Writing

- Students writing well-organised paragraphs and providing additional details for their ideas scored 3 and 4 for Content and Language.

- Students scoring 2 or 1 for Content and Language tended to provide few ideas and generally based their writing on the prompts.

- Off-topic writing passages were awarded 0 for Content and Features and did not score more than a 2 for Organisation and Language.

- Some students were able to provide relevant content and could describe a series of given pictures with some supporting details though they lacked appropriate vocabulary and the writing contained grammatical errors. In some cases, students used simple connectives, 'first', 'second day' or 'last day', though the content lacked coherence. (Student exemplars 1, 3)

- Using a wider range of vocabulary with fewer grammatical errors, capable students provided more details in their writing. (Student exemplar 7)

- Although students could write well-organised paragraphs, few could elaborate on the topic and generally based their comments on the prompts. (Student exemplars 2, 4) Students with better writing skills could develop well-organised paragraphs and could for instance, even offer advice about the activities at their school. (Student exemplar 6)

- On a familiar topic about school clubs and activities, students generally used simple language patterns and their ideas lacked supporting details. Many errors in spelling and grammar at times hindered comprehension. (Student exemplar 4)

- Capable students wrote better organized passages and elaborated giving valid reasons for which school clubs or activities to join. (Student exemplars 5, 8)

- Many students were unable to use proper tenses correctly, especially the simple past tense. (Student exemplars 1, 3)

- Students, in many instances, misspelled common words such as these examples, 'tried' for 'tired', 'frist' for 'first', 'hoilday' for 'holiday', 'quite' for 'quiet', 'form' for 'from' and 'effect' for 'affect'.

S.3 Speaking

- Student presentations lasting less than one minute scored no more than 2 (all criteria).

- Students who read word for word from their own notes were not awarded a score higher than 2 (all criteria).

- Students who only read out questions using the prompts were not contributing ideas to the discussion and no score was awarded on 'Task Completion – Ideas and Intelligibility'.

- In 'Individual Presentations', students generally expressed adequate ideas that were relevant to the topic when prompted. They could communicate some ideas clearly using simple language patterns and vocabulary, but with errors that at times impeded communication.

- Some students could only present their ideas with a limited range of vocabulary and simple language patterns with some grammatical errors.

- Students could speak quite clearly but with some errors in pronunciation. Some students dropped or added end consonants incorrectly e.g. 'uses' (9ESP1), 'teaches' (9ESP3), 'appearance' (9ESP7), 'Jade' (9ESP8) etc. Others had problems with a few consonant blends and digraphs.

- Some students hesitated occasionally and used fillers such as 'ah' and 'hmm' in their presentations. Others hesitated to the extent that their speech was stilted and difficult for listeners to comprehend.

- The more capable students made attempts to display an awareness of their audience using appropriate eye contact with the oral assessors.

- In 'Group Interactions', students could give short, simple responses to ideas that were relevant to the topic. Their responses were generally brief and they seldom elaborated on their own ideas or provided further details in their discussions.

- Students used only limited interaction strategies when responding to others, for example, 'I agree', 'That's a good idea!' or 'What do you think?'

- In some cases, students were extremely self-conscious about their oral communication skills. They did not actively participate in the interaction or were extremely hesitant during the conversation.

Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Secondary 3 TSA 2006, 2007 and 2008

The percentage of S.3 students achieving Basic Competency in 2007 was slightly higher than the percentage for the year 2008 which was 68.9% as shown in Table 7.29.

Table 7.29 Percentages of S.3 Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency in 2006, 2007 and 2008

Year	% of Students Achieving Mathematics Basic Competency
2006	68.6
2007	69.2
2008	68.9

A comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of S.3 student performances in TSA 2006, 2007 and 2008 provides useful information on how teachers can help students improve their skills. Table 7.30 summarises such a comparison.

Table 7.30   Comparison of Student Performance in English Language at Secondary 3 TSA 2006, 2007 and 2008

Year / Skill	2006	2007	2008
Reading	• The main strength of S.3 students was locating specific information from more than one text, e.g. activity schedules and bar charts, and extracting simple information. • In texts with familiar topics, many students were able to infer the writer's views that were not explicitly stated. • Almost half of the students could identify features of different text-types, e.g. 'Introduction page'. • A considerable number of students could not work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions but were able to understand the use of metaphors and the main theme of a poem with a familiar topic.	• Students could generally analyse and integrate information from different text types and identify main characters in film reviews using contextual clues. • Many students were capable of distinguishing between views and attitudes in an article and inferring a writer's point of view in a poem. Many could distinguish fact from opinion. • Capable students were able to interpret and make a plausible conclusion of the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions. Additionally, they could find the meaning of words with definitions from dictionary entries. • A substantial number of students were capable of predicting development based on cues in a reading passage.	• Students could generally analyse information and identify main characters in book reviews using contextual clues. • Some students were capable of distinguishing views and attitudes and inferring a writer's point of view. • Capable students were able to comprehend and make plausible conclusions of the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions using reference skills. • Capable students could identify alliteration in a poem when an example was provided in the question.

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
Writing	• In general, S.3 students showed competence in understanding features required for the correct form in letter writing, narratives and in writing descriptive passages/paragraphs. • Some students were able to provide relevant content and supporting details to some ideas. They could describe the given pictures with some details. When giving advice on behaviour problems, they could express limited ideas but could not elaborate. • Many students could use simple sentences with connectives, such as first, second, and finally, in writing an article. However, providing coherent links between paragraphs were lacking. • Most students had few problems in capitalisation and basic punctuation. Some, however, used a limited range of vocabulary and simple language patterns that at times affected meaning. Many students could not spell common words correctly.	• In general, students could provide reasons and elaborate on familiar topics. They were competent in using correct letter formats and in writing short, descriptive passages. • Students in most cases were able to provide details to support main ideas. Given pictorial cues students could provide relevant ideas and write a coherent and organised passage. • Many students could use simple sentences with connectives, such as 'also', 'therefore' and 'after' in writing an article. However, using cohesive links between paragraphs was lacking in some instances in students' writing. • Many students had difficulty with basic punctuation and often misspelled common words. They used a limited range of vocabulary with simple language patterns that at times affected meaning.	• Students could provide reasons and elaborate on familiar topics though with some spelling and grammatical errors. They were competent in using correct formats in writing short, descriptive passages. • Students in most cases were able to provide details to support main ideas. Given pictorial cues students could provide relevant ideas and write coherent and organised paragraphs. • Many students could use simple sentences with connectives, such as 'first', 'second' and 'finally' in writing paragraphs. Paragraphs were generally well-organised with coherent links. • Many students were unable to use the correct tenses, in particular the simple past correctly, which made it difficult for readers to comprehend. In addition, students could not provide topic sentences with supporting details.

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
Listening	• Most S.3 students could integrate simple information from a tapescript to a given written description. • Most students were able to arrange a story in a chronological order. • Students could extract specific information from stories. • Capable students demonstrated good inference skills in interpreting and evaluating information.	• Most students were competent in understanding spoken language from a tapescript and integrating the information with a given written passage. • Students were competent in sequencing events from a dialogue and could extract information from spoken texts. • Many capable students were competent in identifying rhyming words in a poem. • Capable students were adept at inference and could interpret and evaluate information not explicit in a dialogue.	• Most students were competent in understanding spoken language from a tapescript and integrating the information on an information sheet. • No items on sequencing in the assessments. • Many students were competent in identifying end rhymes in a poem. • Capable students were adept at inference and could interpret and evaluate information not explicit in a dialogue.

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
Speaking	• S.3 Students could speak quite clearly though with some errors in pronunciation that impeded communication at times. They normally dropped end consonants and added end consonants incorrectly. Some had problems with a few consonant blends and digraphs. • In 'Individual Presentations', students generally expressed adequate ideas that were relevant to the topic when prompted. They could communicate ideas clearly and were capable of using simple language patterns and vocabulary, but with some errors that impeded communication. • Some students hesitated occasionally when presenting and others hesitated to the extent that their speech was stilted and difficult for listeners to comprehend.	• Students were capable of presenting ideas and could speak clearly although at times errors in pronunciation impeded communication. Many dropped end consonants or added consonants incorrectly. • Many students expressed adequate ideas when prompted during 'Individual Presentations'. Most could communicate clearly using simple language patterns and vocabulary although errors were evident. • Although students could provide information relevant to the topic, some tended to hesitate frequently or use stilted speech making it difficult for listeners to comprehend or to follow the student's 'Individual Presentation'.	• Students were capable of presenting ideas though pronunciation at times hindered communication of ideas. The addition or dropping of consonants in words made it difficult to understand at times. • Many students generally expressed adequate ideas when prompted during 'Individual Presentations' and delivered their presentations using simple language patterns and vocabulary. • Many hesitated frequently when presenting which made it difficult for oral assessors to understand.

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
	• In 'Group Interactions', students could give short, simple responses to ideas that were relevant to the topic, but they seldom elaborated on their own ideas or extended an idea further. • For strategies for oral communication, students made occasional attempts to display awareness of their audience using appropriate eye contact with the oral assessors when presenting. • Students used limited interaction strategies to respond to others, for example, 'I agree', 'That's a good idea' and 'What do you think?' in group interactions.	• Occasionally students would make an attempt to display awareness of their audience by making eye contact during 'Individual Presentations', however, many simply read their prepared presentation. • In 'Group Interactions' students responded to each other with simple, short responses and seldom elaborated upon or further extended ideas brought up in a discussion. • During 'Group Interactions', students usually responded to each other using limited interaction strategies, for example, 'That's okay' or 'I want to tell you'.	• In many cases, students simply read their presentations though some would occasionally make brief eye contact with the assessors. • In 'Group Interactions' students responded to each other with simple, short responses though some attempted to add details in their responses. • During 'Group Interactions', students usually responded to each other using limited interaction strategies, for example, 'That's okay' or 'I agree' or 'I am agree.'

Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSA 2008

This was the third year that Secondary 3 students participated in the Territory-wide System Assessment at the end of Key Stage 3. The percentage of S.3 students achieving Basic Competency in 2007 was slightly higher than the percentage for the year 2008 as shown in table 7.31. The percentage of S3 students achieving Basic Competency was slightly lower than P3 and P6.

Table 7.31   Percentage of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency

Year Class Level	% of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
P.3	75.9	78.8	79.4	79.5	79.3
P.6	--	70.5	71.3	71.3	71.5
S.3	--	--	68.6	69.2	68. 9

Table 7.32 Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSA 2008

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	S.3
Reading	• Students could match key words with or without pictorial cues. Students were able to identify main ideas in reading texts using contextual clues or pictorial cues. • Students were able to make simple inferences. However, students were still weak in making inferences in longer texts, e.g. stories. • Half the number of students were able to identify the rhyming words in a poem. • Students performed well in predicting the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues and pictorial cues.	• Students were, by and large, able to locate information in a chart and extracting specific information from short, simple texts with the help of pictorial cues. • Most students could interpret implied meaning in short, simple informational texts; however, almost half of the students had difficulty using inference skills to interpret the meaning. • More than half of the students performed well in interpreting poems by understanding the explicit, literal meaning and quite a number of students could identify rhyming words where the end consonants differed in spelling. • Almost half of the students could not extend to interpreting unfamiliar words or expressions in context or extracting specific information from a text where a greater reading load was required.	• Students could generally analyse information from different text types and identify main characters using contextual clues. • Some students were capable of inferring a writer's point of view in a poem. • Capable students were able to comprehend and make a plausible conclusion of the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions using reference skills. • Students could find rhymes and identify alliteration in a poem.

Level / Skill	P.3	P.6	S.3
Writing	• Students' performance in guided writing (with prompts given) is better than that in open-ended writing tasks.	• Students performed better writing a narrative than an expository piece of writing.	• In general, students could provide reasons and elaborate on familiar topics. They were competent in using correct formats in writing short, descriptive passages.
	• When given prompts about a topic, students were able to provide brief but relevant ideas. When writing a story, they could provide a factual account based on given pictures.	• With adequate prompts and a familiar context, students were able to provide interesting ideas with relevant details. They could also provide a factual account of the story with an appropriate ending and give elaboration on the prompts provided in a report.	• Students in most cases were able to provide details to support main ideas. Given pictorial cues students could provide relevant ideas and write a coherent and organised passage.
	• Students provided brief ideas in their writing. Only students with the best performances were able to provide relevant ideas with supporting details.	• Repeated use of action verbs and language patterns was evident in some students' works on the two writing tasks. This made their writing boring and showed students' shortage of vocabulary and language patterns.	• Many students could use simple sentences with connectives, such as 'first', 'second' and 'finally' in writing an article. Paragraphs were generally well-organised with coherent links.
	• More than half of the students used a very limited range of vocabulary and sentence patterns. Spelling and grammatical mistakes were common.	• Past tense was not consistently used to narrate past events and many students used other verb forms. They also had problems in grammar, spelling and sentence structures.	• Many students were unable to use the correct tenses, in particular the simple past, which made it difficult for readers to comprehend. Students used a limited range of vocabulary with simple language patterns that at times affected meaning.

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	S.3
Listening	• Students were able to distinguish numbers like '7' and '17'. Some students were able to distinguish stressed from unstressed sounds. • Most students were able to identify a speaker's tone of voice regarding their feelings of happiness and sadness. • Students showed improvement in identifying main ideas in spoken texts. They could identify the main idea of a spoken text with more than one piece of information. • Quite a number of students were able to make simple inferences from the spoken texts.	• P.6 students were generally successful in distinguishing between various initial and mid consonant sounds. • Students showed steady performance in identifying the speaker's tone, for example, when the speaker spoke in a sad or happy tone. • About half the students had difficulty in connecting ideas using contextual clues or reference words and identifying the main ideas when more than one piece of information was given in a spoken text. • Students showed competence in interpreting information and inferring meaning when pictorial cues were given as options rather than verbal cues.	• Many capable students were competent in identifying rhyming/alliteration words in a poem. • No items on sequencing in the assessment. • Students were capable of answering questions on specific information. • Capable students were adept at inference and could interpret and evaluate information not explicit in a dialogue.

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	S.3
Speaking	• For 'Reading Aloud', half of the students were able to read fluently and clearly with few pronunciation mistakes. Words which required phonic skills were more challenging for some students.	• Students were able to read all or most of the texts aloud quite clearly and audibly but some students dropped end consonants.	• Students were capable of presenting ideas and could speak clearly although at times errors in pronunciation impeded communication. Many dropped end consonants or added consonants incorrectly.
	• For 'Expression of Personal Experiences', more than half of the students responded hesitantly to questions. Questions which elicited factual answers were generally more manageable than open-ended questions.	• Most students were able to provide relevant responses to most of the oral examiner's questions. Some could even provide additional details on familiar topics.	• Many students generally expressed adequate ideas when prompted during 'Individual Presentations'. Most could communicate adequately using simple language patterns and vocabulary although errors were evident.
	• For 'Picture Description', nearly half of the students could provide relevant answers to most of the questions with little prompting. They could respond more naturally on topics such as *English Lesson* and *Going to School* but had difficulty describing the feelings of characters and providing an ending to the story.	• In 'Presentation', students presented their ideas well using a limited range of vocabulary and basic sentence patterns although grammatical mistakes were often apparent. Some students misinterpreted the pictorial cues by giving an account of a story rather than delivering a general presentation on a topic.	• Although students could provide information relevant to the topic, some tended to hesitate frequently or use stilted speech making it difficult for listeners to comprehend or to follow the student's 'Individual Presentation'.
	• For 'Pronunciation', more than half of the students could speak quite clearly despite a few mistakes in pronunciation.	• Students with good speaking skills were able to expand their ideas based on the topic given. They showed confidence and could communicate their ideas quite clearly despite mistakes in pronunciation.	• In 'Group Interactions' students responded to each other with simple, short responses and seldom elaborated or further extended ideas when discussing their assigned topic.