Grade 3 – Informational Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class has been learning about different types of jobs. You find two sources about the life of an astronaut and the type of training that astronauts receive in order to do their job.

Read the sources carefully so you can **write an informational article** about being an astronaut. Using more than one source, develop a main idea about being an astronaut and find ways to use information and details from the sources to support your main idea.

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 5

The paper develops a clear main idea with strong supporting details from the sources. The writer expands with explanations and examples, showing good understanding of what astronauts do before and during space travel. Some minor parts could use more elaboration, but overall, ideas are relevant, organized, and engaging.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Focus:** ○ The opening frames the topic with curiosity: *"Have you ever thought about what it's like to be an astronaut?"*	
✓ **Rich Development:** ○ Details about school and training add depth: ▪ *"Astronauts go to school for 12 years, then go to college for 4 years, and after that they study for two years or more. That's 18 years in total!"*	➢ **Add More Explanation:** ○ After describing exercise with rubber bands, explain *why* it helps astronauts stay healthy. ▪ For example: *"The rubber bands work like weights to keep their muscles strong while floating."*
✓ **Use of Explanation:** ○ Instead of just listing jobs, the student explains why they matter: ▪ *"Some of the jobs are being a medical person so in case someone gets hurt or sick they can be healed… a pilot who can fly the rocket… a scientist who can study how living things such as plants and animals survive in space."*	➢ **Clarify Technical Words:** ○ Terms like *"bird legs"* and *"weak muscles"* could use more explanation so the reader understands what they mean.
✓ **Balance of Fun and Hardship:** ○ The writer contrasts excitement with challenges: ▪ *"Being in space may be fun but is also very dangerous."* This shows nuanced thinking.	
✓ **Slight Gaps:** ○ Some explanations (e.g., why exercise tools help) are mentioned but not fully explained: ▪ *"They use big rubber bands and they stretch in them in different ways."*	➢ **Tie Back to Main Idea:** ○ The conclusion is light ("Maybe when you grow up you will be an astronaut, too"). ○ Strengthen it by restating the main point about how astronauts prepare and what makes the job challenging.

Organization: 5

The writing has a clear and logical flow, moving from education, to training, to space experience, to a conclusion. Paragraphs are distinct and well-sequenced. Transitions are present, though sometimes repetitive, and the ending provides closure.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Strong Introduction:** ○ The opening question *"Have you ever thought about what it's like to be an astronaut?"* hooks the reader.	➢
✓ **Logical Sequencing:** ○ The paper moves step by step: schooling, training, space flight, conclusion. ○ Example: *"After school, there's training. These pre-astronauts will train for hundreds of hours…"*	➢ **Use Linking Sentences:** ○ When listing astronaut jobs, add connecting ideas like *"Each of these jobs is important because astronauts must be ready for any problem in space."*
✓ **Effective Transitions:** ○ Phrases like *"After school," "Finally, it's time to blast off into space"* show sequencing.	➢ **Vary Transitions:** ○ Instead of always using time words (*"after," "finally"*), try others like *"because," "so,"* or *"this means."*
✓ **Clear Closure:** ○ The conclusion ties back to the topic with *"Maybe when you grow up you will be an astronaut, too."* While simple, it offers closure.	➢ **Strengthen Conclusion:** ○ End by summarizing the big idea — astronauts train for years and face challenges, but it can be rewarding.
✓ **Minor Weakness:** ○ Some sections (like the job list) read a bit long without smoother transition phrases connecting each job.	➢

Voice: 3

The writer shows enthusiasm and attempts to engage the reader, especially through questions and exclamations. The personality is visible, but at times the tone is uneven — shifting between factual explanation and playful exclamations.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaging Opener:** ○ The direct question *"Have you ever thought about what it's like to be an astronaut?"* pulls in the reader.	➢
✓ **Expressive Tone:** ○ Exclamations like *"That's 18 years in total! Can you imagine that?"* and *"This is a once in a lifetime event"* show excitement.	➢ **Add Personal Reflections:** ○ After a fact, add what you think about it: *"Studying for 18 years is a long time, but I think it's worth it to go to space."*
✓ **Uneven Energy:** ○ Some sections are more flat and factual: *"They will learn what it is like to be in the International Space Station (ISS)."*	➢ **Stay Consistent:** ○ Use a tone that matches your purpose — informative but still lively.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Playful but Sometimes Distracting:** ○ The *"Yay! Yippee!"* section shows voice, but it interrupts the serious tone about astronaut challenges.	➢ **Balance Fun with Serious:** ○ Keep the excitement but make sure it doesn't take away from the information. ○ Instead of *"Yay! Yippee!"* you could say *"You might think it's all fun, but it's also very dangerous."*

Word Choice: 4

The paper uses subject-specific vocabulary and some lively words, but there is also repetition and occasional vague phrasing. Word choice is functional and sometimes engaging, though not yet vivid or precise throughout.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Strong Vocabulary:** ○ Words like *"International Space Station," "scuba diving lessons," "pilot,"* and *"scientist"* show domain knowledge.	➢
✓ **Descriptive Phrases:** ○ *"Blast off into space"* and *"once in a lifetime event"* add color.	➢ **Add Imagery:** ○ When describing Earth, expand with detail: *"You can see Earth shining like a blue and green marble."*
✓ **Repetition:** ○ Words like *"fun," "hard,"* and *"weak"* appear multiple times.	➢ **Use Stronger Synonyms:** ○ Replace repeated words like *"fun"* with *"amazing," "thrilling,"* or *"incredible."*
✓ **Vague Phrasing:** ○ *"They stretch in them in different ways"* (about exercise bands) is unclear and could be more precise.	➢ **Be Specific:** ○ Instead of *"different ways,"* describe how astronauts move the bands: *"They pull the bands with their arms and legs to keep muscles strong."*

Sentence Fluency: 4

The essay is easy to follow, with mostly complete and correctly structured sentences. There is some variety in length and style, though parts still feel list-like or repetitive. Rhythm is generally smooth but not yet polished.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Varied Sentences:** ○ The student mixes longer descriptive sentences with shorter ones. Example: *"That's 18 years in total! Can you imagine that?"* (short/exclamatory) follows a longer explanation of education requirements.	➢ **Vary Sentence Openings:** ○ Try starting with different words or phrases: *"Because space is dangerous, astronauts train for emergencies."*
✓ **Readable Flow:** ○ Sentences connect logically, making the essay understandable.	➢

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **List-Like Section:** ○ The astronaut jobs section becomes choppy: *"Some of the jobs are being a medical person… being a fixer… a pilot… a leader… and a scientist…"* The repeated structure reduces rhythm.	➢ **Break Up Long Lists:** ○ Instead of stringing jobs together, group them or explain a couple in detail. ○ Example: *"Astronauts have many jobs, such as doctors who keep the crew healthy and pilots who guide the rocket."*
✓ **Repetitive Structures:** ○ Many sentences begin with "They will" or "When you are," limiting variety.	➢ **Mix Sentence Types:** ○ Add questions or short punchy statements to keep the rhythm lively. Example: *"Space looks amazing. But it's also dangerous."*

Conventions: 4

The student demonstrates partial control of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Errors are noticeable but do not completely block understanding.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Errors:** ○ *"mustles"* (muscles), *"wink"* (weak), *"excersize"* (exercise).	➢ **Check Spelling of Hard Words:** ○ Look closely at "muscles," "weak," and "exercise." Use a dictionary or word wall.
✓ **Subject-Verb Agreement:** ○ *"Your head and neck gets puffy"* should be *"get puffy."*	➢ **Fix Verb Endings:** ○ Say the sentence out loud: *"Your head and neck get puffy."* Listen for whether it sounds right.
✓ **Run-on Sentences:** ○ Some longer sentences could use commas or breaks, such as: *"Being in space may be fun but is also very dangerous."*	➢ **Break Long Sentences:** ○ Add commas or periods to separate ideas: *"Being in space may be fun. It is also very dangerous."*
✓ **Capitalization & Punctuation:** ○ Generally correct, with occasional missing commas.	➢

Use of Sources: 4

The essay uses information from both sources and explains it in the student's own words most of the time. No formal citations are provided, but the details clearly come from the readings.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Information from Multiple Sources:** ○ The paper covers training (Source 1) and body changes in space (Source 2). ○ Example: *"Your blood flows up to your head. Your head and neck gets puffy and your legs get small and thin."*	➢
✓ **Mostly Paraphrased:** ○ The student explains ideas in their own words rather than copying.	➢ **Explain the Facts:** ○ After describing bird legs, add why it happens: *"This happens because blood moves differently in space."*

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **No Parenthetical Citations:** ○ Unlike the previous paper, this one does not include (#1) or (#2).	➢ **Add Source Citations:** ○ After giving a fact, include the source number, like *"Astronauts take scuba diving lessons (#1)."*
✓ **No Source List:** ○ The essay ends without listing titles or authors.	➢ **Include a Source List:** ○ At the end, write: *Source 1: Training to Be an Astronaut; Source 2: How Space Changes the Body.*

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Ideas and Content:

Fact + Why Chart:

- Provide students with facts from the sources and have them add a "Why is this important?" column to encourage deeper explanation.

Elaboration Mini-Lesson:

- Model how to take one short sentence (*"Astronauts must exercise"*) and expand it with examples and reasoning.

Strong Conclusions Practice:

- Have students practice writing conclusions that restate the main idea in a new way and add one final thought for impact.

Organization:

Paragraph Mapping:

- Have students map the order of topics in the essay on a flowchart to visualize the logical sequence.

Transition Variety Sort:

- Provide a list of transition types (time, cause/effect, compare/contrast). Students rewrite astronaut sentences using each type.

Job Importance Linking:

- Using the astronaut jobs paragraph, model how to add "link sentences" that explain how each role connects to the mission's success.

Voice:

Tone Matching Activity:

- Give students factual sentences and have them rewrite them in different tones (serious, playful, amazed) to practice consistency.

Fact + Reaction Journals:

- After reading astronaut facts, students add a personal reaction sentence to practice blending information with voice.

Audience Awareness Lesson:

- Have students imagine writing the astronaut essay for younger kids vs. scientists, and compare how the tone would change.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Word Choice:

Overused Word Swap:

- Identify repeated words in the essay and brainstorm stronger synonyms as a class.

Precise Detail Practice:

- Give students vague phrases from the essay (e.g., “different ways”) and have them rewrite them with specific descriptions.

Imagery Challenge:

- Ask students to describe space sights (Earth, stars, floating) with similes or metaphors to enhance imagery.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Sort:

- Give students astronaut sentences starting with the same word and ask them to rewrite each with a new beginning.

Combining Sentences Practice:

- Provide the job list and model how to combine into smoother sentences.

Read Aloud for Rhythm:

- Have students read their essays aloud and mark where sentences feel repetitive or choppy.

Conventions:

Spelling Word Study:

- Focus on common tricky words (exercise, muscles, weak). Create personal spelling lists from the essay.

Sentence Fixing Warm-Up:

- Provide one incorrect sentence per day from the essay. Students work together to edit for subject-verb agreement or punctuation.

Peer Editing Checklist:

- Have students trade essays with a checklist for spelling, grammar, and sentence breaks.

Use of Sources:

Cite While You Write:

- Model how to put a (#1) or (#2) after a sentence from the text. Practice this with short astronaut facts.

Paraphrase vs. Copy Practice:

- Show sentences from the sources and ask students to rewrite in their own words.

Mini-Lesson on Bibliography:

- Teach a simple works cited list format and have students create one at the end of their papers.