Grade 3 – Informational Writing Work Sample: Meets

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: 4

The paper clearly explains what astronauts do and how they prepare, using information from the sources. The main idea is consistent, and details support it, but some points could be developed more fully. The writing shows understanding but doesn't yet provide the depth, elaboration, or original insight that would raise it higher.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Main Idea:** ○ The piece begins with a strong introduction: *"Being an astronaut sounds exciting, but it takes a lot of work and training."* This frames the article well.	➢
✓ **Relevant Supporting Details:** ○ The writer uses accurate details from the sources, such as *"They practice first aid, do science experiments, and even take scuba diving classes"* (source #1) and *"Their hearts and bones get weaker because they don't have to work as hard in space"* (source #2).	➢ **Make Connections Between Ideas:** ○ Right now, the paper moves from training to body changes to the conclusion. Try linking ideas together. ○ For example: *"Astronauts practice scuba diving because it helps them prepare for how their bodies will feel different in space."*
✓ **Sufficient but Limited Development:** ○ While the examples are relevant, some ideas are listed rather than fully explained. ○ For instance, *"They also learn how to fix thing's and how to fly space vehicles"* is accurate but could be expanded with why those skills matter.	➢ **Add More Explanation:** ○ Instead of just saying astronauts "fix things," explain *what kinds of things* they might need to fix (e.g., equipment, computers, or even the space station).
✓ **Some Original Thinking:** ○ The conclusion adds a personal reflection: *"I think it would be amazing to become an astronaut one day!"* ○ That gives the writing a personal spark, though most of the content is straight from the sources.	➢ **Balance Facts with Your Voice:** ○ You did a great job including information from the sources. Next time, try adding more of your own thinking. ○ For example, after describing that astronauts feel sick at first, you might explain why that would be challenging for their work.

Organization: 4

The writing has a clear beginning, middle, and end. The introduction sets up the topic, and the conclusion provides closure. Transitions are simple but functional, and the order of ideas makes sense. However, some sections feel list-like, and transitions could be smoother to help the ideas flow more naturally.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Structure:** ○ The introduction starts with: *"Being an astronaut sounds exciting, but it takes a lot of work and training."* This frames the article well.	➢
✓ **Logical Order:** ○ The paper moves from training to physical changes to conclusion. For example: *"Astronauts train for hundreds of hours…"* (training), followed by *"When astronauts go into space, their bodys change."* (effects in space).	➢ **Avoid List-Like Feel:** ○ Instead of just listing training tasks (*"They practice first aid, do science experiments, and even take scuba diving classes"*), explain how they connect. ○ For example: *"These activities prepare astronauts for the unexpected problems they might face in space."*
✓ **Basic Transitions:** ○ Words like *"also"* and *"even though it can be hard"* show attempts at transition, but most sections still read as a series of separate chunks.	➢ **Smooth Transitions:** ○ Try adding linking sentences between sections. For example: *"All of this training helps astronauts get ready for the changes they will feel in space."*
✓ **Closure Provided:** ○ The ending wraps up with excitement about astronauts: *"Even though it can be hard, being an astronaut is one of the most exciting jobs."* This gives the piece a sense of completeness.	➢ **Strong Conclusion:** ○ You did a nice job adding your own thought at the end. Next time, try tying your conclusion back to the beginning. ○ For instance: *"Being an astronaut takes a lot of work, but all the training makes it possible for them to do this exciting job."*

Voice: 3

The writing shows some enthusiasm, especially in the conclusion, but much of the piece feels factual and closely tied to the sources. The student's personality and unique perspective are only lightly present.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Personal Touch at the End:** ○ The student concludes with *"I think it would be amazing to become an astronaut one day!"* This shows authentic excitement and personal connection.	➢ **Add More Personal Reactions:** ○ After giving a fact, tell what you think about it. ○ Example: *"Astronauts get dizzy in space. I think that would make it hard to do their work at first!"*
✓ **Mostly Informational Tone:** ○ The bulk of the paper is straightforward fact-reporting: *"Their hearts and bones get weaker because they don't have to work as hard in space."* While accurate, it doesn't carry a distinct student "voice."	➢ **Keep Energy Throughout:** ○ The introduction and conclusion show excitement. Try adding that same energy in the middle. ○ For example, when you talk about scuba diving, you could add: *"I would love to try that because it's like practicing for space!"*
✓ **Reader Engagement:** ○ The opening *"Being an astronaut sounds exciting, but it takes a lot of work and training"* hints at a conversational tone, but the middle sections lose that energy and sound more like copied textbook information.	➢ **Talk to the Reader:** ○ Pretend you're explaining to a friend. Instead of just saying *"Astronauts use special exercise tools,"* you might say: *"Can you imagine trying to do push-ups while floating? That's why they use rubber bands to stay strong."*

Word Choice: 4

The student uses clear, accurate vocabulary related to astronauts and space. Some vivid verbs and descriptive phrases add interest, but the language is mostly straightforward and sometimes repetitive. Word choice supports meaning but does not always create strong imagery or variety.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Domain-Specific Vocabulary:** ○ Words like *"International Space Station," "scuba diving," "exercise tools,"* and *"space vehicles"* show the writer is using appropriate academic terms.	➢
✓ **Some Strong Verbs:** ○ Phrases like *"float around in space"* and *"move and strech their muscles while floating"* add action and clarity.	➢ **Use More Precise Synonyms:** ○ Instead of saying "strong" several times, try words like *"powerful," "healthy,"* or *"fit."*
✓ **Repetition and Simplicity:** ○ Words like *"strong," "exciting,"* and *"hard"* appear multiple times without much variation. ○ For example: *"They must be smart, strong, and ready for anything"* and *"To stay strong, astronauts use special exercise tools."*	➢ **Avoid Overuse of Simple Words:** ○ Words like "exciting" are good, but you could also say *"thrilling"* or *"incredible"* to keep the reader interested.
✓ **Limited Figurative Language:** ○ The paper is mostly factual, with little use of simile, metaphor, or imagery to make ideas come alive.	➢ **Add Descriptive Phrases:** ○ When you write about astronauts seeing Earth, you could expand: *"They get to see Earth as a big blue ball in the sky."*

Sentence Fluency: 4

The writing is mostly readable, but many sentences begin the same way and follow a similar pattern. Some sections feel list-like, and the rhythm is uneven. While there are no confusing fragments, the flow could be smoother with more variety.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Repetitive Openings:** ○ Several sentences start with "They" or "Astronauts," such as: *"They practice first aid, do science experiments, and even take scuba diving classes.* ○ *They also learn how to fix thing's and how to fly space vehicles."*	➢ **Mix Up Beginnings:** ○ Instead of starting many sentences with "They," try other openings. ○ For example: *"To get ready for space, astronauts practice first aid and scuba diving."*
✓ **List-Like Rhythm:** ○ The training section reads like a series of items strung together without much variation in length or style.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences:** ○ Merge simple sentences into compound or complex sentences for smoother flow. ○ Example: *"Astronauts train for hundreds of hours, learning how to live on the space station and even practicing scuba diving."*

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable but Uneven:** ○ While the sentences are clear, the lack of varied structure causes the reader to slow down or re-read in places. ○ For example, *"Astronauts train for hundreds of hours. They learn how to live and work on the International Space Station."*	➢ **Vary Sentence Length:** ○ Try mixing shorter and longer sentences. ○ A longer sentence can explain details, and then a short sentence can add punch: *"Astronauts work hard to stay strong. Space is tough."*

Conventions: 4

The writing demonstrates control of grade-level conventions. There are some errors in spelling and punctuation, but they do not interfere with understanding.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Errors Present:** ○ *"bodys"* instead of *"bodies"* and *"strech"* instead of *"stretch."*	➢ **Fix Spelling Mistakes:** ○ Watch for small errors like "bodys" (bodies) and "strech" (stretch). Reading aloud or using a spell-checker can help. ➢ **Double-Check Word Endings:** ○ Words that end in -ies or -es (like "bodies") can be tricky. Try sounding them out slowly.
✓ **Minor Apostrophe Mistake:** ○ *"thing's"* should be *"things."*	➢ **Check Apostrophes:** ○ Remember that apostrophes show possession, not plurals. For example, write *"things"* instead of *"thing's."*
✓ **Generally Correct Grammar and Punctuation:** ○ Sentences are complete and capitalized correctly, and periods are used appropriately. Dialogue is not present, but sentence structure is solid.	➢

Use of Sources: 4

The student uses accurate information from both sources and cites them in parentheses. The information is mostly paraphrased, with a few direct lifts, but it shows understanding.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Citations Provided:** ○ The writer references sources directly: *"They learn how to live and work on the International Space Station (#1)"* and *"At first, they can feel dizzy and sick (#2)."*	➢ **Keep Using Multiple Sources:** ○ Great job using both sources. Try to add at least one more fact from each to show even stronger use.
✓ **Information from Several Sources:** ○ Training details come from Source #1, and body changes from Source #2.	➢ **Include a Source List:** ○ At the end of your paper, add a short list of sources used. For example: *Source 1: "Training to Be an Astronaut" — Source 2: "How Space Changes the Body."*

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Paraphrasing with Some Direct Phrasing:** ○ Most details are put into the student's own words, though some are close to the original wording.	➢ **Add Explanations:** ○ After giving a fact from a source, explain it in your own words so the reader knows what it means. Example: *"Astronauts get dizzy in space (#2). This makes it harder to focus on their work at first."*

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:

Detail Expansion Mini-Lesson:

- Teach students how to take one fact and ask follow-up questions ("why is this important?" "how does this connect to other ideas?"). Practice with astronaut facts by modeling how to turn a simple fact into a detailed explanation.

Fact + Commentary Practice:

- Have students write two-part sentences: first a fact from the source, then their own sentence explaining it in their own words. Example: *"Astronauts use rubber bands to exercise. This helps keep their muscles strong even without gravity."*

Concept Mapping:

- Use a graphic organizer where students connect training activities to the challenges astronauts face in space. This helps them see relationships between ideas and encourages fuller development in writing.

Organization:

Transition Word Sort:

- Provide students with a set of transition words/phrases (e.g., cause/effect, compare/contrast, sequence).
- Have them sort and practice inserting these into astronaut sentences to see how meaning changes.

Paragraph Linking Activity:

- Give students short "chunks" of information about astronauts. Have them practice writing linking sentences to connect the chunks into a smooth paragraph.

Loop Back Conclusions:

- Teach students how to "loop back" in their conclusions by restating the main idea from the introduction in a new way. Model this with the astronaut essay, then have them try it with their own writing.

Voice:

Fact + Reaction Journals:

- After reading informational texts, have students write one fact and then a personal reaction sentence (what they think, feel, or wonder). This builds the habit of weaving voice into factual writing.

Audience Awareness Mini-Lesson:

- Have students write a short passage for two different audiences (a friend vs. a teacher) to see how tone changes. Apply this to astronaut facts so they practice choosing an engaging tone.

"Show Excitement" Sentence Stems:

- Provide sentence starters like *"I think it's amazing that…"* or *"It would be hard to…"* Encourage students to use these after factual statements to bring their voice into the piece.

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:

Word Swap Activity:

- Provide a list of overused words (e.g., "good," "strong," "exciting"). Have students brainstorm or use a thesaurus to find stronger, more precise synonyms. Apply this to astronaut writing.

Descriptive Sentence Challenge:

- Take a plain sentence from the essay (*"Astronauts train for hundreds of hours"*) and have students add adjectives, vivid verbs, or similes to make it more engaging.

Domain Vocabulary Wall:

- Create a class word wall of space-related terms from the sources (e.g., "gravity," "orbit," "capsule"). Encourage students to use these words in their writing for precision.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Starter Variety:

- Provide students with different sentence starters (e.g., "Because…," "In order to…," "While…") and practice rewriting astronaut facts using each.

Combining Sentences Practice:

- Give students short, choppy astronaut facts and model how to combine them with conjunctions or appositives.

Read Aloud for Rhythm:

- Have students read their writing aloud to a partner. If it sounds "choppy," they can try combining or rearranging sentences until it flows more smoothly.

Conventions:

Spelling Pattern Mini-Lesson:

- Teach the "y" to "ies" spelling rule with practice words (body - bodies, story - stories).

Proofreading Checklist:

- Provide a short checklist for students (capitals, spelling, punctuation). Have them use it on astronaut paragraphs before submitting.

Error Hunt:

- Display a version of the student's paragraph with errors left in. As a class, "hunt" for the mistakes and correct them together.

Use of Sources:

Quote + Paraphrase Practice:

- Give students short sentences from the astronaut texts. Have them practice quoting directly, then paraphrasing in their own words.

Source Integration Activity:

- Provide facts from two sources and model how to connect them in one sentence (e.g., "Astronauts train with scuba diving (#1) to help them get ready for the floating feeling their bodies experience in space (#2).").

Mini-Lesson on Works Cited:

- Introduce a simplified bibliography format for 3rd grade (title + author). Practice writing a list at the end of a class essay.