Grade 3 – Informational Writing Work Sample: Approaching

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: 3

The paper introduces astronauts and includes some relevant facts about life in space and training, but the development is uneven. Some points are clear, while others are repeated or under-explained. The writing shows understanding but lacks the depth and elaboration of stronger responses.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Topic:** ○ The writer introduces the subject with questions: *"Have you ever want go to space? Ever want to see the moon up close?"*	➢
✓ **Relevant but Basic Details:** ○ Mentions space gyms: *"Space staitions have gyms set up so you can keep your muscles strong."* and training: *"You have to spend hundred of hours learning to do weightless training and medical skills."*	➢
✓ **Partial Development:** ○ Some facts are stated without much explanation (e.g., *"You also have to learn about space and science"*).	➢ **Explain More:** ○ After writing *"space stations have gyms set up,"* add *why* — *"because astronauts need to exercise to keep their muscles from shrinking."*
✓ **Repetition:** ○ The phrase *"get use to"* is repeated several times and weakens clarity.	➢ **Avoid Repetition:** ○ Instead of repeating *"get use to,"* try varying phrases like *"adjust to"* or *"practice until it feels normal."*
✓ **Limited Elaboration:** ○ Interesting ideas like "bird legs" are mentioned but not expanded beyond a quick explanation.	➢ **Add More Details:** ○ Expand "learn about space and science" by naming a specific subject or experiment astronauts might study.

Organization: 3

The essay has a beginning, middle, and end, but transitions are weak, and ideas sometimes feel jumbled or repeated.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Opening:** ○ Begins with questions to engage: *"Have you ever want go to space? Ever want to see the moon up close?"*	➢

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ Sequence of Ideas: ○ Moves from introduction , space challenges , training , body changes , and conclusion. The order mostly makes sense.	➢
✓ **Weak Transitions:** ○ Shifts between sections are abrupt: *"Training to be a astronaut is hard too. You have to spend hundreds of hours…"*	➢ **Stronger Transitions:** ○ Instead of jumping straight from training to body changes, use a link: *"All of this training helps astronauts get ready for what happens when they finally reach space."*
✓ **Repetition of Concepts:** ○ *"Get use to"* and "muscles get smaller" ideas reappear, causing the organization to feel less smooth.	➢ **Avoid Repetition:** ○ Eliminate duplicate ideas or combine them in one place.
✓ **Conclusion:** ○ Ends with *"They work hard and have many adventures."* This closes the piece but is too general.	➢ **More Complete Ending:** ○ Instead of the general *"They work hard and have many adventures,"* try restating the main idea: *"Even though astronauts face challenges, their training prepares them for exciting discoveries in space."*

Voice: 3

The essay shows some enthusiasm, especially in the opening questions, but much of the writing feels flat or purely factual. The student's personality is present but faint.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaging Questions:** ○ The start is lively: *"Have you ever want go to space? Ever want to see the moon up close?"*	➢ **Keep Asking the Reader:** ○ You began with questions — try sprinkling in more, like *"Would you like to float around a space station?"*
✓ **Matter-of-Fact Sections:** ○ Statements like *"You also have to learn about space and science"* and *"They work hard and have many adventures"* lack energy or personal touch.	➢
✓ **Some Spark:** ○ Words like *"strange things happen"* hint at curiosity but aren't fully developed.	➢ **Use Excitement Words:** ○ Add stronger expressions to match your enthusiasm, like *"amazing," "incredible,"* or *"unbelievable."*
✓ **Limited Reader Connection:** ○ The piece doesn't address the reader much beyond the first two questions.	➢ **Add Personal Reaction:** ○ After saying *"strange things happen,"* share what you think: *"It would feel so weird to see your legs get smaller!"*

Word Choice: 3

The vocabulary is functional and includes some domain-specific words, but it often feels basic or imprecise. Repetition and vague phrasing limit effectiveness, and word errors sometimes weaken clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Subject-Specific Vocabulary:** ○ Words like *"astronaut," "space stations," "gravity"* are on-topic.	➢ **Be More Specific:** ○ Instead of *"learn about space and science,"* name a topic: *"learn about planets, stars, and how to stay safe in space."*
✓ **Overuse of Simple Words:** ○ "Hard" and "get use to" appear multiple times without variation.	➢ **Vary Words:** ○ Use different words instead of repeating *"hard"* — try *"challenging"* or *"difficult."*
✓ **Vague Phrases:** ○ *"Learn about space and science"* is too general.	➢
✓ **Errors Affect Word Choice:** ○ Misspellings like *"staitions"* and *"birds legs"* distract from clarity.	➢ **Fix Word Endings:** ○ Write *"bird legs"* instead of *"birds legs."*

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are mostly complete but lack variety and smooth flow. Repetition of patterns makes the writing feel choppy at times.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Repetitive Structure:** ○ Many sentences begin with "You have to" or "Your." ○ Example: *"Your head get puffy and neck gets bigger. Thats because most of your blood is traveling to your head."*	➢ **Change Sentence Starters:** ○ Instead of repeating "You have to," try *"Astronauts must…"* or *"Because space is dangerous, astronauts…"*
✓ **Readable but Choppy:** ○ Short, simple sentences dominate, limiting rhythm.	➢ **Mix Sentence Lengths:** ○ Use one long sentence for detail, then a short one for emphasis: *"Astronauts spend hours practicing in water to feel weightless. It's tough."*
✓ **Lack of Variety:** ○ Few compound or complex sentences are used.	➢ **Combine Sentences:** ○ Merge short sentences: *"Your head gets puffy and your neck gets bigger because blood travels to your head."*

Conventions: 2

Frequent errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation distract from the piece and sometimes interfere with clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Mistakes:** ○ *"staitions"* (stations), *"birds legs"* (bird legs), *"want go"* (want to go).	➢ **Check Spelling Carefully:** ○ Use a word wall or dictionary for tricky words like "station," "astronaut," and "exercise."

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Verb Errors:** ○ *"Have you ever want go to space?"* should be *"Have you ever wanted to go to space?"*; *"Your muscles gets smaller"* should be *"muscles get smaller."*	➢ **Fix Verb Endings:** ○ Use "wanted" instead of "want," and make sure verbs match subjects (muscles *get*, not *gets*).
✓ **Punctuation Issues:** ○ Missing spaces after periods: *"space?Ever"*; missing commas in places.	➢ **Watch Sentence Spacing:** ○ Add a space after periods so sentences don't run together.
✓ **Capitalization:** ○ Generally correct, but inconsistent spacing weakens readability.	➢

Use of Sources: 3

The essay uses some information from the sources but does not clearly identify them or show balanced use. Details are included, but source handling is uneven.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Some Source Information:** ○ Mentions gyms on space stations (Source 1) and body changes like puffy head and bird legs (Source 2).	➢ **Use Both Sources More Evenly:** ○ Add more about astronaut training from Source 1 to balance details about body changes.
✓ **No Citations:** ○ Unlike Paper A, this one doesn't use (#1) or (#2).	➢ **Cite Facts:** ○ After a fact, write (#1) or (#2) to show where it came from.
✓ **Uneven Use:** ○ More details come from Source 2 than Source 1.	➢
✓ **Partial Paraphrasing:** ○ Some facts are close to source wording (e.g., muscles shrinking) without much rephrasing.	➢ **Explain in Own Words:** ○ Instead of copying, rewrite: *"Astronauts' legs look thin because blood moves to their head."*

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 Expansion Mini-Lesson:

- Model how to turn a short statement into a fuller idea by asking "why?" and "how?" Practice with astronaut facts (e.g., why exercise is important).

Repetition Awareness:

- Highlight repeated words/phrases in the student's paper and brainstorm synonyms or varied sentence structures to replace them.

Detail Hunt Activity:

- Provide students with broad facts from the source (e.g., "astronauts study science") and ask them to brainstorm specific examples or experiments to expand the detail.

Organization:

Transition Sentence Stems:

- Provide a list like *"This shows that…," "Because of this…," "In the end…"* and have students insert them between ideas.

Outline Practice:

- Before writing, have students create a 4-step outline (intro, training, space effects, conclusion) to plan organization.

Conclusion Loop-Back Exercise:

- Model how to "loop back" to the introduction in the conclusion, reinforcing the main point with stronger closure.

Voice:

Fact + Feeling Sentences:

- Have students practice writing one fact and one reaction (e.g., "Astronauts get dizzy in space. I think that would make it hard to do science experiments.").

Reader Engagement Practice:

- Encourage adding a question or "imagine if" statement in the middle of factual paragraphs.

Excitement Word Bank:

- Build a classroom list of lively words for students to draw from when they want to show voice in informational writing.

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:

Precise Word Hunt:

- Give students vague sentences (like "learn about science") and have them add specifics (biology, physics, experiments).

Synonym Ladder:

- Practice finding stronger synonyms for common words ("hard → tough → challenging").

Word Wall of Space Terms:

- Display astronaut-related words from the sources (e.g., orbit, capsule, training, gravity) for students to use.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Combining Practice:

- Use astronaut facts and challenge students to join two short sentences into one smooth one.

Variety Challenge:

- Ask students to write three sentences about astronauts, each starting differently (time word, -ing phrase, question).

Choral Reading:

- Have the class read a paragraph aloud together to hear where it sounds choppy, then revise for flow.

Conventions:

Daily Edit Routine:

- Provide a few sentences from the essay with errors left in. Have students edit together.

Verb Agreement Mini-Lesson:

- Practice matching singular/plural subjects and verbs (muscles get vs. muscle gets).

Spelling Pattern Practice:

- Focus on common errors (tion endings, past tense verbs).

Use of Sources:

Balanced Source Notes:

- Teach students to take notes from both sources and color-code them (Source 1 = blue, Source 2 = red).

Paraphrase Game:

- Give a sentence from the source and challenge students to say it in two different ways.

Cite While Writing:

- Practice adding (#1) or (#2) directly after sentences when drafting to build the habit.