Nevada Department of Education

Nevada Formative Writing Tools

Fourth Grade

Evaluation Guides

2014

GRADE 4

Nevada Department of Education

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The Nevada Formative Writing Tools

The Nevada Formative Writing Tools are designed to energize and empower teachers to shift writing instruction to meet the demands of the Nevada Academic Content Standards and improve student writing.

On October 24, 2012, a committee of educators met in Carson City to fundamentally change the Nevada elementary- and middle-school writing assessments. This committee grappled with an expanding understanding of the Common Core Standards (now known as the Nevada Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts or NACS for ELA), the spring 2015 administration of the Smarter Balanced assessments, the testing requirements of NRS 389.550, and the realization that the current writing assessment had evolved into a summative assessment (rather than its original formative intent). The committee charged the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) with redesigning the elementary- and middle-school writing assessments into formative tools that will allow teachers to evaluate students at multiple points during the school year and adjust their instruction to match the needs of students.

The NDE established a workgroup with statewide representation of classroom teachers, administrators, district curriculum experts, and trainers from all of the Regional Professional Development Programs to create new formative writing tools. When incorporated into classroom practice, these tools provide the information needed to adjust teaching and support learning. They will help teachers determine next steps for instruction so that students meet the NACS for ELA end-of-grade expectations.

A substantial body of research shows descriptive feedback is the most effective instructional strategy for students to improve in their writing. Therefore, the main purpose of the Nevada Formative Writing Tools is to help students better understand what they are doing well and get specific feedback on how to move to the next step in their learning progression.

What are the Fourth Grade Formative Writing Tools?

When incorporated into regular classroom practice, the Fourth Grade Formative Writing Tools provide the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while it's happening. In this sense, the tools inform both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. These adjustments help to ensure students achieve targeted standards. Formative tools help teachers determine next steps during the learning process as the instruction approaches the summative assessment of student learning.

These tools establish a vision for good writing, build a common vocabulary, and enhance assessment and instruction. The Fourth Grade Formative Writing Tools include:

- Fourth Grade Evaluation Guides
- Fourth Grade Formative Writing Tasks
- Fourth Grade Opinion, Informative/Explanatory, and Narrative Exemplars (also known as anchor papers)

Introduction to the Evaluation Guides

The first set of formative writing tools released by the NDE is the evaluation guides. Aligned to the NACS for ELA, the evaluation guides include rubrics developed by Smarter Balanced, teacher checklists that support the rubrics, student writing guides for the three modes of writing, teaching tips for using the evaluation guides, and a glossary of writing terms.

The Nevada Formative Writing Tools are designed to provide information to adjust teaching and inform learning.

Smarter Balanced Rubrics

In preparation for the implementation of the spring 2015 assessments, Smarter Balanced released a set of analytic writing rubrics and encouraged educators to use them to begin planning the shifts in instruction that will be required to help students meet the demands of the standards. These analytic rubrics include four levels of performance for the five traits (or criteria) that will be evaluated. Carefully crafted performance descriptors articulate what writing looks like along the progression of each trait.

The rubrics include several features to help teachers, students, and parents understand what good writing looks like, and prepare for the new assessments. Teachers and students will use these rubrics in many aspects of their teaching and learning. For example, the rubrics can be used as a tool for evaluating classroom writing assignments, monitoring student progress, and helping students understand and develop the skills necessary to write.

Each performance level is designed to describe performance on each trait so that teachers can provide specific instructional feedback to students and not necessarily to assign scores. If districts or schools decide to use the rubrics for grading classroom assignments, they are encouraged to establish clear policies for their use. Because the rubrics are part of the formative writing tools, the NDE has not and will not establish passing scores.

Teacher Checklists

Grade level checklists were designed to support teachers as they learn to use the Smarter Balanced rubrics (opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative). While the Smarter Balanced rubrics were designed for grade bands (i.e. grades 3 through 8 in narrative writing), the checklists clarify essential knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to fourth grade. The checklists are fundamental for documenting student strengths and areas to improve when conferencing with students and parents, and will support the consistency of evaluating the Fourth Grade Formative Writing Tasks.

Use the checklists when learning the analytic rubrics, to document specific student strengths and areas to improve, and when conferencing with students and parents.

Student Writing Guides

The Student Writing Guides are easily used by students before, during, and after the writing process.

Closely aligned to the NACS for ELA and Smarter Balanced writing rubrics, the Student Writing Guides are designed to communicate writing expectations in clear, student-friendly language. Therefore, the guides can be used by students during all phases of the writing process and for all types of writing assignments. As a prewriting and drafting tool, they establish a vision for good writing and provide common vocabulary for students to use when talking about their writing. The guides are also valuable tools during the drafting, editing, and revising stages, serving as a tool for self-reflection and peer revising/editing. As a post-writing tool, the guides can be used for teacher and peer conferencing, setting goals for improvement, and helping students articulate their analysis of other students' writing.

Teaching Tips

At first glance, it is easy to see how the evaluation guides can be used as a tool for assessment; however, with a little creativity and teaching ingenuity, the evaluation guides can also serve as a rich source of information for instruction. The teaching tips are practical ideas for using the rubrics, teacher checklists, and student writing guides as part of day-to-day writing instruction.

Use the evaluation guides as a regular part of day-to-day teaching and learning.

Glossary

The glossary is provided to define and elaborate terms used in the grade level rubrics and checklists, and serves as a starting place to establish a common vocabulary for writing.

2014 Opinion Writing Rubric (Grades 3-5)

	4	3	2	1
Statement of Purpose/Focus	The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused: • opinion is clearly stated, focused, and strongly maintained • opinion is communicated clearly within the context	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: • opinion is clear and for the most part maintained, though some loosely related material may be present • context provided for the claim is adequate	The response is somewhat sustained with some extraneous material or a minor drift in focus: • may be clearly focused on the opinion but is insufficiently sustained • opinion on the issue may be unclear and unfocused	The response may be related to the purpose but may offer little or no focus: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • opinion may be confusing or ambiguous
Organization	The response has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness: • effective, consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical progression of ideas from beginning to end • effective introduction and conclusion for audience and purpose	The response has a recognizable organizational structure, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety • adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end • adequate introduction and conclusion	The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end • conclusion and introduction, if present, are weak	The response has little or no discernible organizational structure: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude
Elaboration of Evidence	The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques	The response provides adequate support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes the use of sources, facts, and details: • some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise • adequate use of some elaborative techniques	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details: • evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present, are uneven • weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant
Language and Vocabulary	The response clearly and effectively expresses ideas, using precise language: • use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response adequately expresses ideas, employing a mix of precise with more general language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response expresses ideas unevenly, using simplistic language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary that may at times be inappropriate for the audience and purpose	The response expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary • may have little sense of audience and purpose
Conventions	The response demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation are present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscured

A response gets no credit (0) if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].

Nevada Department of Education

This rubric was released by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to help teachers, administrators, and policymakers better understand the Common Core Standards and prepare for the implementation of the Smarter Balanced assessments. The Nevada Department of Education has reformatted it to fit on one page.

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2014 Informative/Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 3-5)

	4	3	2	1
Statement of Purpose/Focus	The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused: • controlling idea or main idea of a topic is focused, clearly stated, and strongly maintained • controlling idea or main idea of a topic is introduced and communicated clearly within the context	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: • focus is clear and for the most part maintained, though some loosely related material may be present • some context for the controlling idea or main idea of the topic is adequate	The response is somewhat sustained and may have a minor drift in focus: • may be clearly focused on the controlling or main idea, but is insufficiently sustained • controlling idea or main idea may be unclear and somewhat unfocused	The response may be related to the topic but may provide little or no focus: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • focus may be confusing or ambiguous
Organization	The response has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness: • use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical progression of ideas from beginning to end • effective introduction and conclusion for audience and purpose	The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety • adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end • adequate introduction and conclusion	The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end • conclusion and introduction, if present, are weak	The response has little or no discernible organizational structure: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude
Elaboration of Evidence	The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques	The response provides adequate support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the use of sources, facts, and details: • some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise • adequate use of some elaborative techniques	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details: • evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present, are uneven • weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from the source material is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant
Language and Vocabulary	The response clearly and effectively expresses ideas, using precise language: • use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response adequately expresses ideas, employing a mix of precise with more general language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response expresses ideas unevenly, using simplistic language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary that may at times be inappropriate for the audience and purpose	The response expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary • may have little sense of audience and purpose
Conventions	The response demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors are present in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation may be present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscure

A response gets no credit (0) if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].

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2014 Narrative Writing Rubric (Grades 3-8)

	4	3	2	1
Narrative Focus	The narrative, real or imagined, is clearly focused and maintained throughout: • effectively establishes a setting, narrator and/or characters, and point of view (point of view begins in 7th grade)	The narrative, real or imagined, is adequately focused and generally maintained throughout: • adequately establishes a setting, narrator and/or characters, and point of view (point of view begins in 7th grade)	The narrative, real or imagined, is somewhat maintained and may have a minor drift in focus: • inconsistently establishes a setting, narrator and/or characters, and point of view (point of view begins in 7th grade)	The narrative, real or imagined, may be maintained but may provide little or no focus: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • focus may be confusing or ambiguous
Organization	The narrative, real or imagined, has an effective plot, helping create unity and completeness: • effective, consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical sequence of events from beginning to end • effective opening and closure for audience and purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, has an evident plot, helping create a sense of unity and completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of a variety of transitional strategies • adequate sequence of events from beginning to end • adequate opening and closure for audience and purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, has an inconsistent plot, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of basic transitional strategies with little variety • uneven sequence of events from beginning to end • opening and closure, if present, are weak • weak connection among ideas	The narrative, real or imagined, has little or no discernible plot: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude
Elaboration of Narrative	The narrative, real or imagined, provides thorough and effective elaboration, using details, dialogue, and description: • effective use of a variety of narrative techniques that advance the story or illustrate the experience	The narrative, real or imagined, provides adequate elaboration, using details, dialogue, and description: • adequate use of a variety of narrative techniques that generally advance the story or illustrate the experience	The narrative, real or imagined, provides uneven, cursory elaboration using partial and uneven details, dialogue, and description: • narrative techniques, if present, are uneven and inconsistent	The narrative, real or imagined, provides minimal elaboration using little or no details, dialogue, and description: • use of narrative techniques is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant
Language and Vocabulary	The narrative, real or imagined, clearly and effectively expresses experiences or events: • effective use of sensory, concrete, and figurative language clearly advance the purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, adequately expresses experiences or events: • adequate use of sensory, concrete, and figurative language generally advance the purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, unevenly expresses experiences or events: • partial or weak use of sensory, concrete, and figurative language that may not advance the purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language • may have little sense of purpose
Conventions	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscured

A response gets no credit (0) if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].

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Teacher Checklist
Grade 4 Opinion Writing (part 1)

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

	4 Thorough Understanding	3 Adequate Understanding	2 Partial Understanding	1 Minimal Understanding
Statement of Purpose/Focus	☐ Clearly states opinion	☐ Adequately states opinion	☐ Somewhat unclear opinion	☐ May be loosely related to purpose or confusing or ambiguous or lacks opinion
	☐ Purposefully focused	☐ Generally focused	☐ Somewhat unfocused or minor drift in focus	☐ Major drift in or lacks focus
	☐ Strongly maintained throughout	☐ Generally maintained (some loosely related material may be present)	☐ Somewhat or insufficiently maintained (some extraneous material)	☐ Too brief to be maintained
	☐ Clearly provides context for the opinion	☐ Adequately provides context for the opinion	☐ Some context is provided for the opinion	☐ Insufficient or lacks context for the opinion
Organization	☐ Clearly and effectively introduces the topic or text with attention to audience and purpose	☐ Adequately introduces the topic or text with attention to audience and purpose	☐ Weak introduction	☐ Lacks introduction
	☐ Logically groups ideas from beginning to end	☐ Adequately groups ideas from beginning to end	☐ Uneven progression of ideas	☐ Unrelated ideas intrude or does not group ideas
	☐ Logical progression of ideas from beginning to end	☐ Adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end	☐ Uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end	☐ Frequent extraneous ideas intrude or lacks progression of ideas
	☐ Effectively uses a variety of linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons	☐ Adequately uses a variety of linking words and phrases to connect opinion and reasons (some ideas may be loosely connected)	☐ Inconsistently uses a limited variety of linking words and phrases	☐ Few or no linking words and phrases are evident
	☐ Effective concluding statement/section is related to the task and addresses audience and purpose	☐ Adequately provides a concluding statement /section that is related to the task and addresses audience and purpose	☐ Weak concluding statement/ section	☐ Lacks concluding statement/ section
Elaboration of Evidence	☐ Thoroughly and convincingly supports opinion and reasons with facts and/or details related to topic	☐ Adequately supports opinion and reasons with facts and/or details related to topic	☐ Uneven or cursory support of opinion and reasons with partial/uneven use of facts and/or details related to topic	☐ Minimal or no support of opinion and reasons with facts and/or details related to the topic
	☐ Smoothly integrates comprehensive and relevant evidence from sources	☐ Adequately integrates relevant evidence from sources	☐ Weakly integrates relevant evidence from sources	☐ Integration of evidence from sources is minimal or in error or irrelevant or absent
	☐ Precisely lists all sources	☐ Adequately lists sources	☐ Uneven or inconsistent listing of sources	☐ List of sources is minimal or in error or irrelevant or absent
	☐ Effectively uses a variety of elaborative techniques	☐ Adequately uses some elaborative techniques	☐ Weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	☐ Minimal or no elaborative techniques are evident

Opinion checklist continues on next page.

Teacher Checklist
Grade 4 Opinion Writing (part 2)

	4 Thorough Understanding	3 Adequate Understanding	2 Partial Understanding	1 Minimal Understanding
Language and Vocabulary	☐ Clearly and effectively expresses ideas using precise academic vocabulary	☐ Adequately uses academic vocabulary (may mix precise and more general language)	☐ Uneven use of academic vocabulary or simplistic language	☐ Limited or vague or unclear or confusing use of academic vocabulary or language
	☐ Clearly and effectively expresses ideas using precise domain-specific vocabulary	☐ Adequately uses domain-specific vocabulary	☐ Uneven use of domain-specific vocabulary or simplistic vocabulary	☐ Limited or vague or unclear or confusing use of domain-specific vocabulary
	☐ Clearly uses language and vocabulary that is appropriate for audience and purpose	☐ Adequately uses language and vocabulary that is generally appropriate for audience and purpose	☐ Uneven or inappropriate use of language and vocabulary for audience and purpose	☐ Limited sense of audience and purpose
Conventions	☐ Few, if any, errors in usage and sentence formation	☐ Some errors in usage and sentence formation are present (no systematic pattern of errors)	☐ Frequent errors in usage and sentence formation may obscure meaning	☐ Severe errors in usage and sentence formation obscure meaning
	☐ Effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Severe errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling obscure meaning

Comments:

The purpose of this checklist is (1) to support teachers as they learn to use the 2014 Opinion Writing Rubric (Grades 3-5); (2) to clarify essential knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to fourth grade; (3) to use as a tool for conferencing with individual students; and (4) to use as an optional tool to enhance the consistency of evaluating the Nevada Formative Writing Tasks.

Teacher Checklist

Grade 4 Informative/Explanatory Writing (part 1)

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

	4 Thorough Understanding	3 Adequate Understanding	2 Partial Understanding	1 Minimal Understanding
Statement of Purpose/Focus	☐ Clearly states controlling/main idea	☐ Adequately states controlling/main idea	☐ Somewhat unclear controlling/main idea	☐ May be loosely related to purpose or confusing or ambiguous or lacks controlling/main idea
	☐ Purposefully focused	☐ Generally focused	☐ Somewhat unfocused or minor drift in focus	☐ Major drift in or lacks focus
	☐ Strongly maintained throughout	☐ Generally maintained (some loosely related material may be present)	☐ Insufficiently or somewhat maintained (some extraneous material)	☐ Too brief to be maintained
	☐ Clearly provides context for the controlling/main idea	☐ Adequately provides context for the controlling/main idea	☐ Some context is provided for the controlling/main idea	☐ Insufficient or lacks context for the controlling/main idea
Organization	☐ Clearly and effectively introduces the topic with attention to audience and purpose	☐ Adequately introduces the topic with attention to audience and purpose	☐ Weak introduction	☐ Lacks introduction
	☐ Logically groups related information in paragraphs and sections	☐ Adequately groups related information in paragraphs and sections	☐ Limited grouping of some information	☐ Lacks evidence of grouping related information
	☐ Logical progression of ideas from beginning to end	☐ Adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end	☐ Uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end	☐ Frequent extraneous ideas intrude or lacks progression of ideas
	☐ Effectively uses a variety of linking words and phrases to connect ideas	☐ Adequately uses a variety of linking words and phrases to connect ideas (some ideas may be loosely connected)	☐ Inconsistently uses a limited number of linking words and phrases	☐ Few or no linking words and phrases are evident
	☐ Effective use of formatting, illustrations, and multimedia (when useful to aiding comprehension)	☐ Some use of formatting, illustrations, or multimedia (when useful to aiding comprehension)	☐ Limited use of formatting, illustrations, or multimedia (when useful to aiding comprehension)	☐ Minimal or no use of formatting, illustrations, or multimedia (when useful to aiding comprehension)
	☐ Effective concluding statement/section is related to the task and addresses audience and purpose	☐ Adequate concluding statement/section is related to the task and addresses audience and purpose	☐ Weak concluding statement/ section	☐ Lacks concluding statement/ section
Elaboration of Evidence	☐ Thoroughly and convincingly supports controlling/main idea with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotes, and/or other information related to topic	☐ Adequately supports controlling/main idea with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotes, and/or other information related to topic	☐ Uneven or cursory support of controlling/ main idea with partial/uneven use of information, examples, and/or sources related to topic	☐ Minimal or no support of controlling/main idea with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotes, and/or other information related to topic
	☐ Smoothly integrates comprehensive and relevant information from sources	☐ Adequately integrates relevant information from sources	☐ Weakly integrates relevant information from sources	☐ Integration of information from sources is minimal or in error or irrelevant or absent
	☐ Precisely lists all sources	☐ Adequately lists sources	☐ Uneven or inconsistent listing of sources	☐ List of sources is minimal or in error or irrelevant or absent
	☐ Effectively uses a variety of elaborative techniques	☐ Adequately uses some elaborative techniques	☐ Weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	☐ Minimal or no elaborative techniques are evident

Informative/Explanatory checklist continues on next page

Teacher Checklist
Grade 4 Informative/Explanatory Writing (part 2)

	4 Thorough Understanding	3 Adequate Understanding	2 Partial Understanding	1 Minimal Understanding
Language and Vocabulary	☐ Clearly and effectively expresses ideas using precise academic vocabulary	☐ Adequately uses academic vocabulary (may mix precise and more general language)	☐ Uneven use of academic vocabulary or simplistic language	☐ Limited or vague or unclear or confusing use of academic vocabulary or language
	☐ Clearly and effectively expresses ideas using precise domain-specific vocabulary	☐ Adequately uses domain-specific vocabulary	☐ Uneven use of domain-specific vocabulary or simplistic vocabulary	☐ Limited or vague or unclear or confusing use of domain-specific vocabulary
	☐ Clearly uses language and vocabulary that is appropriate for audience and purpose	☐ Adequately uses language and vocabulary that is generally appropriate for audience and purpose	☐ Uneven or inappropriate use of language and vocabulary for audience and purpose	☐ Little sense of audience and purpose
Conventions	☐ Few, if any, errors in usage and sentence formation	☐ Some errors in usage and sentence formation are present (no systematic pattern of errors)	☐ Frequent errors in usage and sentence formation may obscure meaning	☐ Severe errors in usage and sentence formation obscure meaning
	☐ Effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Severe errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling obscure meaning

Comments:

The purpose of this checklist is (1) to support teachers as they learn to use the 2014 Informative/Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 3-5); (2) to clarify essential knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to fourth grade; (3) to use as a tool for conferencing with individual students; and (4) to use as an optional tool to enhance the consistency of evaluating the Nevada Formative Writing Tasks.

Teacher Checklist

Grade 4 Narrative (Real or Imagined) Writing (part 1)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear even sequences.

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

	4 Thorough Understanding	3 Adequate Understanding	2 Partial Understanding	1 Minimal Understanding
Narrative Focus	☐ Clearly focused and maintained on the task throughout	☐ Adequately focused and maintained on the task throughout	☐ Somewhat focused and maintained on the task or minor drift from the task	☐ Little focus or very brief or major drift or confusing or lacks focus
	☐ Effectively establishes a situation/setting to orient the reader	☐ Adequately establishes a situation/setting to orient the reader	☐ Inconsistently establishes a situation/setting that may orient the reader	☐ Lacks situation/setting
	☐ Effectively establishes a narrator and/or characters to orient the reader	☐ Adequately establishes a narrator and/or characters to orient the reader	☐ Inconsistently establishes a narrator and/or characters that may orient the reader	☐ Lacks narrator and/or characters
Organization	☐ Effective opening for audience and purpose	☐ Adequate opening for audience and purpose	☐ Weak opening that may not address audience and purpose	☐ Lacks opening
	☐ Effective plot creates unity and completeness	☐ Adequate plot creates unity and completeness (may have minor flaws and some loosely connected ideas)	☐ Uneven or flawed plot	☐ Little or no discernible plot
	☐ Natural and logical sequence of events from beginning to end	☐ Adequate sequence of events from beginning to end (may have minor flaws)	☐ Uneven sequence of events from beginning to end (may have obvious flaws)	☐ Frequent extraneous ideas intrude or lacks sequence of events
	☐ Effectively uses a variety of linking words and phrases to connect ideas	☐ Adequately uses a variety of linking words and phrases (some ideas may be loosely connected)	☐ Inconsistently uses a limited number of linking words and phrases	☐ Few or no linking words and phrases are evident
	☐ Effective closure/conclusion for audience and purpose	☐ Adequate closure/conclusion for audience and purpose	☐ Weak closure/conclusion with flaws for audience and purpose	☐ Limited or lacks closure/conclusion
Elaboration of Narrative	☐ Narrative techniques effectively advances the story or illustrate the experience	☐ Narrative techniques adequately advances the story or illustrate the experience	☐ Narrative techniques uneven or inconsistently advances the story or illustrates the experience	☐ Use of narrative techniques is minimal or in error or irrelevant or absent
	☐ Thorough and effective elaboration of details	☐ Adequate use of elaboration of details	☐ Uneven or cursory use of elaboration of details	☐ Minimal or no elaboration of details
	☐ Thorough and effective use of dialogue (when useful)	☐ Adequate use of dialogue (when useful)	☐ Uneven or cursory use of dialogue (when useful)	☐ Minimal or no dialogue (when useful)
	☐ Thorough and effective use of description	☐ Adequate use of description	☐ Uneven or cursory use of description	☐ Minimal or no description

Narrative checklist continues on next page.

Teacher Checklist
Grade 4 Narrative (Real or Imagined) Writing (part 2)

	4 Thorough Understanding	3 Adequate Understanding	2 Partial Understanding	1 Minimal Understanding
Language and Vocabulary	☐ Effective use of sensory details clearly advances the purpose	☐ Adequate use of sensory details generally advances the purpose	☐ Partial or weak use of sensory details may not advance the purpose	☐ Vague or confusing or lacks sensory details
	☐ Effective use of concrete words and phrases clearly advances the purpose	☐ Adequate use of concrete words and phrases generally advances the purpose	☐ Partial or weak use of concrete words and phrases may not advance the purpose	☐ Vague or confusing or lacks concrete words
	☐ Effective use of figurative language that clearly advances the purpose	☐ Adequate use of figurative language that generally advances the purpose	☐ Partial or weak use of figurative language may not advance the purpose	☐ Vague or confusing or missing figurative language
Conventions	☐ Few, if any, errors, in usage and sentence formation	☐ Some errors in usage and sentence formation are present (no systematic pattern of errors)	☐ Frequent errors in usage and sentence formation may obscure meaning	☐ Severe errors in usage and sentence formation obscure meaning
	☐ Effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	☐ Severe errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling obscure meaning

Comments:

The purpose of this checklist is (1) to support teachers as they learn to use the 2014 Narrative Writing Rubric (Grades 3-8); (2) to clarify essential knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to fourth grade; (3) to use as a tool for conferencing with individual students; and (4) to use as an optional tool to enhance the consistency of evaluating the Nevada Formative Writing Tasks.

Grade 4

Student Guide for Opinion Writing

Statement of Purpose/Focus

- ☐ I clearly state my opinion.
- ☐ I maintain focus throughout my writing.
- ☐ I support my opinion with context.

Organization

- ☐ I clearly introduce my topic.
- ☐ I group related information in paragraphs.
- ☐ I organize my reasons and evidence from beginning to end.
- ☐ I use linking words and phrases that help connect my opinion and reasons.
- ☐ I include a concluding statement or section that is related to my opinion.
- ☐ I address audience and purpose in my introduction and conclusion.

Elaboration of Evidence

- ☐ I support my opinion with facts, details, and reasons.
- ☐ I include relevant evidence from sources.
- ☐ I include my sources.
- ☐ I use elaborative techniques that support my opinion.

Language and Vocabulary

- ☐ I express my ideas with academic vocabulary.
- ☐ I use domain-specific vocabulary.
- ☐ I use language appropriate for the audience and purpose.

Conventions

- ☐ I edit my paper for correct usage.
- ☐ I edit my paper for sentence formation.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct punctuation.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct capitalization.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct spelling.

Nevada Department of Education

Grade 4

Student Guide for Informative/Explanatory Writing

Statement of Purpose/Focus

- ☐ I clearly state my controlling or main idea.
- ☐ I maintain focus throughout my writing.
- ☐ I support my controlling or main idea with context.

Organization

- ☐ I clearly introduce my topic.
- ☐ I group related information in paragraphs.
- ☐ I organize ideas from beginning to end.
- ☐ I use a variety of linking as words and phrases that help link my ideas.
- ☐ I include a concluding statement or section that is related to my information or explanation.
- ☐ I use formatting, illustrations, or multimedia to help the reader better understand my topic (when useful).
- ☐ I address audience and purpose in my introduction and conclusion.

Elaboration of Evidence

- ☐ I support my controlling or main idea with information and examples.
- ☐ I include evidence from sources.
- ☐ I include my sources.
- ☐ I use elaborative techniques that support my controlling or main idea.

Language and Vocabulary

- ☐ I express my ideas with academic vocabulary.
- ☐ I use domain-specific vocabulary.
- ☐ I use language appropriate for the audience and purpose.

Conventions

- ☐ I edit my paper for correct usage.
- ☐ I edit my paper for sentence formation.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct punctuation.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct capitalization.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct spelling.

Nevada Department of Education

Grade 4

Student Guide for Narrative (Real or Imagined) Writing

Narrative Focus

- ☐ I maintain focused on the task throughout my writing.
- ☐ I establish a setting or situation.
- ☐ I establish a narrator and/or characters.

Organization

- ☐ I include an opening that establishes a situation.
- ☐ I include a plot with a natural sequence of events.
- ☐ I use a variety of linking words and phrases that help connect my ideas.
- ☐ I provide a conclusion with a sense of closure and completeness.

Elaboration of Narrative

- ☐ I elaborate by providing details.
- ☐ I elaborate by providing description.
- ☐ I use narrative techniques (such as dialogue and pacing) to advance the story, illustrate the experience, or show how characters respond to the situation.

Language and Vocabulary

- ☐ I use appropriate sensory details.
- ☐ I use concrete words and phrases.
- ☐ I use appropriate figurative language.

Conventions

- ☐ I edit my paper for correct usage.
- ☐ I edit my paper for sentence formation.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct punctuation.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct capitalization.
- ☐ I edit my paper for correct spelling.

Nevada Department of Education

Teaching Tips

Out with the Old, In with the New!

Set your old rubrics next to the Smarter Balanced rubrics. Compare and contrast how these rubrics are similar and different. Identify ways the new rubrics will add depth and rigor to your writing instruction. If the old rubrics don't measure up, then toss them out.

Step into the Writer's Shoes

After students understand the Smarter Balanced rubrics and/or checklists, ask them to evaluate, revise, and edit a sample essay.

- Display an old pair of tennis shoes and tell the class that they will step into another student's shoes and help him/her to improve an essay. (Consider using a current or former student's essay, after obtaining his/her permission, or you might compose an essay of your own.)
- Display the essay on an overhead or document camera and read it along with the class.
- Distribute the rubric or checklist and evaluate the essay as a class. The class can assign levels for each trait or you can provide those levels. Go through the checklist to determine the strengths and what areas need improvement. The most important task is to discuss areas that need to be improved.
- Ask students to work in pairs to revise and edit this sample as if they were the author of the essay.
- Make it a contest by challenging teams of two students to improve the essay to the top level in all traits or categories.
- Have teams switch papers and use the rubric or checklist to double-check the levels assigned to each trait. They should justify their levels by highlighting the text in the essay that matches the rubric or checklist.
- Have teams share with the class and determine which pair of students wins.

Who is My Audience?

Students need an awareness of the audience and purpose each time they write. Knowing your audience and purpose can have a huge impact when addressing *Statement of Purpose/Focus*, *Elaboration of Evidence*, *Language and Vocabulary*, and *Conventions*. Ask students to reflect on audience and purpose during the various stages of the writing process, especially when revising. Prompt them to reflect on their use of language and evidence in reaching these two elements within their own writing.

Don't be a Flip Flopper

When asked to write an opinion or argument, it is important for students to take a stance and stick to it. Even if they are asked to write on a topic about which they do not have a strong opinion, students should take a position and support it. In other words, don't flip flop back and forth explaining the positives about both choices. Let students know that is acceptable to address an opposing or alternate view if they are pointing out something that will reinforce their opinion or argument. When students are asked to write an opinion or argument about something they don't really like either choice, it is okay to pretend. Authors write works of fiction all the time, students can too! If students are communicating an opinion that is only partially true, they should remember to keep a ring of honesty to it so that it sounds as if they truly believe all of their points are valid and important, even if they don't matter that much to the students. The most important thing for students to remember when writing an opinion or argument is to take a stance and stick to it with well-developed and valid support from beginning to end.

Paraphrasing vs. Plagiarizing

Explain the difference between paraphrasing and plagiarizing, using definitions in the glossary. Be sure students understand that using another person's words or ideas without crediting the original writer is wrong. Discuss some of the consequences of plagiarizing (i.e., failing the assignment or class, being required to do the work over, suspension/expulsion, lawsuits, fines, or being fired from a job). Reinforce that paraphrasing is an alternate to plagiarizing.

Using a short article or essay, model paraphrasing. Emphasize that if students cannot paraphrase after reading, they need to go back and reread to clarify information. In pairs, have students use the same article or essay to practice paraphrasing so that they can learn to use the strategy independently.

Students will need prompting and encouragement to use this strategy after the initial instruction is completed. The lesson can be extended to help students prepare to write reports about particular topics.

One Brick at a Time

Learning the language of the rubrics, checklists, and writing guides can be a daunting task for students. The Great Wall of China wasn't built in a day. Instead, it was built one brick at a time. Dedicate a space in your classroom to display grade-specific writing vocabulary (a writing word wall). Each week add one or two new grade-specific words. Help students define the word and provide examples. This will help develop a common writing language in the classroom.

While reviewing the rubrics/checklists with your students, use the glossary to define unfamiliar terms. Encourage students to refer to the glossary when using the rubrics, checklists, and planning guides.

As you are working on each mode of writing, consider having students develop their own glossary with definitions and examples. Encourage them to write "in-your-own-words" definitions and help them find examples from the texts you study in class.

Put on Your Coaching Hat

Conferring with students is a vital part of formative assessment. View yourself as a writing coach, not as an evaluator. Using the checklist, student writing guide, and their completed pieces help students to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and discover ways to improve their writing. As you discuss a student's work, refer to specific evidence in the writing that is reflected in the checklist. Don't overwhelm a student with all of the problems at once. Focus on one or two things that will make the biggest impact on the student's writing.

You can also share the coaching hat with your students by having them use the checklists or guides for peer conferencing. Have students read each other's work and use the checklists or guides to give specific feedback. This will allow the students to become more familiar with the e guides, while receiving and offering suggestions on how to improve their own writing. When students view other pieces of writing, they will find areas of strength and weakness in both their peers' writing as well as their own.

Not Everything is as Fast as a Cheetah

There is a fine line between painting a picture with words and loading an essay with clichés. Most teachers know clichés when they smell them. Help your students sniff them out and replace them with well-chosen, vivid language.

It's All about Good Writing

Teach students to write so they can communicate emotions, ideas, and information to the world around them. Don't teach students writing so that they will pass tests. If you teach them to be good writers, they can't help but do well on tests!

Glossary

academic vocabulary—words and phrasing used in textbooks, in classrooms, and on tests; a way of saying or writing something using different words and structure from everyday spoken English

adequate—enough in quantity or quality; good enough to be acceptable; sufficient; satisfactory

advances—moves forward; to continue in a process of development

alternate claim—different view of an issue or topic; ideas or opinions that differ

ambiguous—something that is unclear, confusing, or can be understood in more than one way

analyze—to examine carefully and in detail to identify causes, key factors, possible results, etc.; to study something closely

appeals to emotion—manipulating the emotions, rather than the reason or logic, of an audience in order to convince readers of a point of view or a course of action

appropriate—correct or suitable for a particular situation

argumentative writing— a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer's position, belief, or conclusion is valid; using persuasive strategies to change the reader's point of view, to bring about some action on the reader's part, or to ask the reader to accept the writer's explanation or evaluation of a concept, issue, or problem

audience—the intended readers of a particular piece of writing

balance—the arrangement of words, phrases, or ideas so that two or more concepts or sections are given equal emphasis

character—a person, animal, or make believe creature in a book, play, poem, etc.

citation techniques—ways to reference a book, article, web page or other published or unpublished sources, such as Oxford, MLA, APA; an abbreviated way of acknowledging the works of others within the body of a text

citation—reference to a published or unpublished source with name, date, and/or page; to mention something as an example, especially one that supports, proves, or explains an idea or situation; to give the exact words or ideas of something that has been written; direct quotation, summarizing, paraphrasing, mentioning the source briefly, or using the ideas from a source

claim—saying that something is true; the main idea or thesis statement in argumentative writing and is supported by evidence

clause—a group of words that contains a subject (what or whom the sentence is about) and predicate (tells something about the subject), but which is usually only part of a sentence

clearly—in a way that is easy to understand; without any doubt

closure/conclusion—when an event, problem, story, essay, etc., is brought to an end; the feeling that something has been completely dealt with; the feeling that something is finished

cohesion—when the ideas or parts of a written piece are connected in a reasonable way and form a united whole

completeness—a sense that all parts, details, facts, etc. are included and nothing is missing; brought to an end

comprehensive—includes all the necessary facts, details, or problems; covering completely or broadly

concluding statement/section—the end portion of an essay where the writer supplies a good sense of closure; a creative re-statement of the thesis statement, controlling idea, or theme; a brief review of the main points of the essay

conclusion—the deliberate ending of a narrative that gives the reader a sense of completion, warrant further thought, or reflect on the significance for the writer or reader

concrete details—facts, quotes, or examples from the source; specific information that prove or explain your opinion; can't be argued with

concrete support—evidence that is the proof you need to support your main/controlling idea; reasons for the audience to agree with your position; facts, examples, evidence, reasons, proof, quotations, statistics, etc.

concrete words—definite and specific terms; objects that are available to the senses (seen, felt, tasted, heard, and/or smelt)

content—the subject or topic covered in a piece of writing (also see ideas)

context—(1) a set of facts, details, or events that are related to the topic and help the reader fully understand the topic; parts of a text that surround a word or passage and can determine its meaning (2) the situation, events, or information that are related to something and help the reader better understand the topic; the interrelated conditions in which something exists (i.e., environment or setting, social or cultural situation)

controlling idea—the main idea or thesis that a writer develops, expressing a definite opinion or attitude about a topic

conventions—the agreed upon ways to use punctuation, spelling, grammar, and other things that make writing consistent and easy to read

convince—to make someone feel certain that something is true; to cause someone to agree to do something

counter claim—the opposite view of an issue or topic; a contradicting idea or opinion

credible sources—relevant journals, books, articles, websites, newspapers, and other places of information that are reliable and trustworthy

cursory—done very quickly without much attention to details

description—to give details about someone or what something is like; to give a mental image of something experienced

detail—a single feature, fact, or piece of information about something

development—the specific details, examples, anecdotes, etc. that are added to a paragraph or essay to develop its controlling/main idea(s), reveal the writer's depth of understanding, and offer insight to readers; common patterns of development include narration, description, definition, example, division, classification, comparison and contrast, analogy, cause and effect, and process

dialogue—written conversation between two or more persons; an exchange of ideas and opinions

discernible—to see or notice something with difficulty or effort

domain-specific vocabulary—words and phrases specific to a particular field of study, such as the human body

drift in focus—moving away from the purpose or intent; to deviate or vary from the original statement of purpose

edit—to improve the clarity, organization, concision, and correctness of expression relative to task, purpose, and audience

effective—successful and working the way it was intended; producing a result; having an intended effect

elaborative techniques—using sensory details, facts and statistics, incidents, specific examples, quotations, and charts or graphs to prove the argument and make your writing more interesting

engages reader—attracting and keeping the attention of the audience; the audience is likely to think the writing is interesting; the audience becomes involved in order to better understand

even development—depth and balance in the exploration or examination of the topic (i.e., even development from beginning to middle to end, or even development between main idea and supporting details, or even development between supporting ideas with examples and details)

evidence—facts, figures, details, quotations, or other sources of data and information that provide support for claims or an analysis that can be evaluated by others; anything that makes you believe something is true

experience—something that happened; an event or series of events

extraneous ideas—something that does not belong or is not proper; not pertinent; irrelevant

fact—a piece of information that can be proven true

figurative language—language enriched by word images and figures of speech

flaw—a mistake or a weakness that makes something imperfect

focus—relationship of supporting details to the main idea(s), theme, or unifying point

formal style—objective and precise language used in scholarly books and articles, technical reports, and research papers

formatting—the aspects of the physical appearance of written work (i.e., font size, titles, headings, subheadings, citations)

frequent—happening or doing something often

ideas—the interesting, important, and informative details the writer includes; the main message, the content of the piece, and the main theme, together with all the supporting details; the unusual, the unique, and the bits and pieces that a writer includes

illustration—a picture in a book, article, essay, etc., that helps you understand it

imagery—the use of language to create sensory impressions

inconsistently—not always in the same way

informative/explanatory writing—writing that conveys information accurately; this kind of writing serves to increase readers' knowledge of a subject, to help readers better understand a procedure or process, or to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept

insight—the capacity to discern the true nature of a situation; a grasping of the inward or hidden nature of things or of perceiving in an intuitive manner

insufficient—not providing enough of what is needed

integrated—combining, organizing, or structuring many ideas or parts that work well together

introduction—the beginning portion of an essay where the writer captures the readers' attention, provides background information about the topic, motivates readers to continue reading and, for more formal essays, contains the thesis statement

intrude—interrupting in an unwanted or annoying way

irrelevant—something that is not useful or not connected to the topic or situation; not important

lack—not enough of something, or none of it

linking words, phrases, clauses—terms that join sentences, paragraphs, sections, or ideas together (see also transitional strategies)

logical progression—when the reader can follow the writer's ideas; ordering paragraphs so that there is a meaningful beginning, bridging one paragraph or idea to the next, and ending with a sense of closure

logical— seeming reasonable and sensible; using a thinking process in which ideas are connected in a correct or orderly way

loosely related—when the relationship between two or more different things is not very strong; not exactly connected

main idea (controlling idea)—the primary topic of a passage, whether explicitly expressed or implied

maintain—to make something continue in the same way; to continue without changing

minimal—very small or slight; the smallest amount or degree possible; barely adequate

mode—types of writing generally centered on the writer's purpose, including opinion/argument, informative/descriptive, and narrative in the Nevada Academic Standards

multimedia—using several different methods of giving information such as pictures, sounds, video; involving computer programs that use combination of text, audio, still images, animation, video, etc.

narrative techniques—procedures or methods an author uses to convey an experience (i.e., pacing, description, reflection, narration, dialogue, point of view, foreshadow, flashback)

narrative writing— conveys experience, either real or imaginary, and uses time as its deep structure; can be used for many purposes (to inform, instruct, persuade, or entertain)

narrator—the person who tells the story or explains what is happening; a character who recounts the events of a novel, play, or narrative poem

natural—usual; as you would expect; not surprising

obscure meaning—to make it difficult to know or understand; to prevent something from being understood clearly

opening—the beginning or first part (also see introduction)

opinion writing—a developing form of argument where the writer expresses ideas or states what is believed about a subject; providing examples, offering reasons, and explaining cause and effect to extend a belief, attitude, or judgment

opposing claim—the other side of an issue or topic; ideas or opinions that are completely different

organizational structure—a writing pattern that connects ideas, including comparison-contrast, deductive logic, point-by-point analysis, development of a central theme, chronological history of an event, or any of a dozen other identifiable patterns

organization—the way the writer moves from one idea to the next; information is given to the reader in the right amount and at the right time so that the reader does not lose interest

orients reader—introduce the subject to the audience

pacing—the rate at which main ideas and development are presented in a piece of writing

paraphrase—expressing what others have said or written in a different way; a restatement or rewording

partial—not complete

persuasive strategies/techniques—writing methods that appeal to a reader's emotions, ethics, or logics

phrase—a group of words that together express an idea but do not usually form a complete sentence

plagiarism— to steal the ideas and words of another and pass them off as his/her own; using another person's words, ideas, or work as his/her own; an idea, phrase, or story that has been copied from another person's work without stating the source

plot—a series of events that form a story, novel, play, etc.

precise language—(1) using the right wording; avoiding too many words or unnecessary figurative language (2) very careful about the details of something; information or details that are exact, clear, and correct

progression—the movement or development of ideas in a piece of writing; a continuous and connected series of actions, events, etc.

purpose—the reason or reasons a person writes something (to express, to describe, to explore/learn, to entertain, to inform, to explain, to argue, to persuade, to evaluate, to problem solve, or to mediate)

quote—repeating exactly what someone else said or wrote; to give something as an example to support what you are saying (see also citation)

reasoning— a process of thinking carefully about something in order to make a judgment; the explanation for why a claim is made; the links between evidence and claim

reasons—the cause or explanation for something that happens; why someone decides to do something

reflection—a thought, idea, or opinion formed as a result of careful thought or consideration

relevant—directly relating to the subject

response—writing that is stimulated by a question, task, or prompt

sensory detail—words that help readers see, hear, feel, taste, and smell the object of an author's description; a feature, fact, or piece of information about something available to the senses

sentence formation—one of five basic patterns around which most English sentences are built (Subject-Verb, Subject-Verb-Object, Subject-Verb-Adjective, Subject-Verb-Adverb, Subject-Verb-Noun)

sequencing—the arrangement or ordering of ideas and content in a piece of writing, including chronological, hierarchical, developmental, easy to difficult, part to whole, simple to complex, thematic, and whole to part

setting—the place where something is or where something happens; the place, time, or conditions where events develop

severe—very bad or serious

situation—a combination of all of the things that are happening; the conditions that exist at a particular time in a particular place

smooth—presented in a logical, meaningful order; without awkward patterns or problems; writing that flows with rhythm and movement as if it is all one seamless thread

source—a person, book, or document used largely for information, as in research

stance—the opinion or attitude taken by a writer on a particular matter

structure—the organization of ideas and content within a piece of writing at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level

support—the quality of details and examples either illustrating, explaining, or defending the central theme, idea, or thesis statement

sustained—keeping the controlling or main idea, theme, or focus going throughout the writing; not interrupting or weakening

syntactic variety—having different types of sentences

syntax—the rules of grammar which control the ways words are arranged to form sentences or phrases

task—the writing assignment that must be done

temporal words—terms related to time or event order, such as first, next, last, before, soon

thesis statement—a statement that clearly delineates the argument or central idea that will be explored in a piece of writing (also see controlling/main idea)

thorough—including every possible detail; not superficial; accurate or careful

tone—the author's attitude toward a topic as reflected in his or her writing

topic—the subject matter with which a writer is working in a particular piece of writing

transitional strategies—methods of connecting sentences, paragraphs, and ideas; words, phrases, clauses, or full sentences that signal relationships; cues that help the reader see the logic of how ideas fit together

transitions—words, terms, phrases, and sentence variations used to arrange and signal movement of ideas (i.e., next, and then, in the end, another reason, after that we went, on the other hand)

uneven—not regular or constant; not uniform or varying in number or quality

unity—combining or ordering parts of writing so that it has an undivided effect; singleness of effect or symmetry and consistency of style

usage—the way words are used in a language (see also syntax)

weak—lacking force or expression; not well thought out; uninteresting; not factually grounded or logically presented; parts that can be easily attacked or criticized

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