



Nevada Formative Writing Tools

Grade 8

Argumentative Tasks

2013

Nevada Department of Education

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Introduction to the Writing Tasks

The Nevada Formative Writing Tasks (Formative Tasks) were developed to help students, teachers, and administrators implement the Common Core Standards (CCS) and prepare for the administration of the spring 2015 Smarter Balanced assessments. The tasks are intended to:

- Encourage students to read closely and analyze information;
- Enable students to produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences;
- Empower teachers to shift and improve instruction to meet the demands of the standards;
- Inform teachers and students when timely adjustments can be made; and
- Provide an early look into the types of writing performance tasks expected on the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The Nevada Formative Writing Tasks illustrate the depth of understanding of the Common Core Standards that will be measured on the Smarter Balanced assessments.

The Formative Tasks are timed, on-demand, classroom writing assignments. They include uniform student directions for writing responses and uniform teacher directions for administering the tasks. Each task was carefully created for consistency of format, content, and administration procedures, allowing teachers to monitor student progress over time. This consistency also makes it possible for teachers to participate in collaborative groups to discuss student progress and refine delivery of writing instruction.

“[Students] need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality first-draft text under a tight deadline as well as the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it.”

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects (p. 41)

All fifth and eighth grade students are required by NRS 389.550 to participate in at least one Nevada Formative Writing Task during the 2012-13 school year. However, the NDE has provided multiple tasks for use in fifth and eighth grades, allowing teachers to monitor students at multiple points during the school year and adjust their instruction to match the needs of students.

To improve the consistency of evaluating the tasks and other classroom writing assignments, the NDE released The Nevada Formative Writing Tools: Grade 8 Evaluation Guides (Evaluation Guides) that include:

- Analytic writing rubrics developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium;
- Checklists to support teachers when learning the rubrics and documenting student progress;
- Student writing guides to support students in all phases of the writing process (before, during, and after); and
- A glossary of terms used in the *Evaluation Guides* to establish a common vocabulary for writing.

The Evaluation Guides identify a student's level of command for each of the five characteristics of writing and can be downloaded at

http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/.

Knowing these levels will help teachers and students identify student strengths and areas to improve. The NDE encourages districts and schools to establish policies for how and when to use the rubrics and checklists for grading other classroom assignments.

However, the NDE **strongly** discourages teachers and schools from using the results of the Formative Tasks as part of their grading, since they were **not** designed as summative or interim assessments. Instead, teachers and schools should use the formative tasks to gather information needed to inform and enhance both teaching and learning.

Results from the Nevada Formative Writing Tasks will not be used to calculate a school's rating on the Nevada School Performance Framework. However, the NDE will collect and report participation rates on each school's report card (as required by NRS 389.550).

Since the results of the tasks are relatively low stakes for schools and teachers, keep them low stakes for students by not assigning grades to them.

Guidelines for Administering the Tasks

WHO: All fifth and eighth grade students who are enrolled in public schools, including charter schools, are required to take at least one Formative Task during the 2012-13 school year. Students with disabilities and students classified as having limited English proficiency (LEP) must also participate.

Accommodations are made for IEP, LEP, and/or 504 students who have testing accommodation plans. The classroom teacher must make certain that all students with special needs receive permissible appropriate accommodations, as indicated in IEPs, LEPs, 504 plans, and Testing Accommodation Plans.

WHAT: The Formative Tasks have students read closely and analyze information to produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences. For the 2012-13 school year, the NDE will provide opinion/argumentative tasks. For the 2013-14 school year, the NDE will provide tasks for the three text types in the CCS (opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative).

Since the tasks are formative, classroom teachers will evaluate their own students' responses using the Evaluation Guides provided by the NDE (http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/). It is strongly recommended that each task be evaluated twice: by the student's classroom teacher and by another teacher. This will facilitate collaborative teams that build a vision of good writing and can focus on using the results of the Formative Tasks to improve teaching and student learning.

The NDE will neither score student responses nor collect student results. However, the NDE will collect participation data in May from each school and each classroom in accordance with NRS 389.550. Participation rates will be published on every school's Nevada Accountability Report.

WHERE: It is strongly recommended that the Formative Tasks be administered by the student's classroom teacher in the regular classroom or computer lab.

WHEN: March 4, 2013, through May 10, 2013, is the timeframe for administering the Formative Tasks. Each district and school may determine exact testing days and times within this testing window. Please check with your district's test director for specific days and times within the mandated timeframe.

WHY: Descriptive feedback is widely considered an important element of improved writing performance. When students understand their **strengths and weaknesses** and are taught how to improve their writing, they learn faster and retain what they have learned longer.

The Formative Tasks and Evaluation Guides can help teachers provide constructive feedback and help students become self-regulated learners. Since the tasks and Evaluation Guides are based on the Common Core Standards and task specifications for the Smarter Balanced assessment, they also play an essential role in aligning teaching, learning, and assessment while allowing districts, schools, and teachers to use them to begin planning the shifts in instruction that will be required to help students meet the demands of the standards and prepare for the Smarter Balanced assessment in 2015.

HOW:

The Nevada Writing Formative Writing Tasks are timed, on-demand classroom writing assignments. The tasks include uniform student directions for writing responses and uniform teacher directions for administering the tasks. The tasks have been carefully designed for consistency of format, content, and administration procedures, allowing teachers to monitor progress over time.

Each task is administered in two timed sessions that should not exceed 45 minutes each. Teachers may administer the sessions over two consecutive days or on the same day with a 15 minute break between sessions. The first 45 minute session involves introducing students to the writing task, helping students understand how the tasks will be evaluated, having students independently read information, and beginning to draft a well-grounded response. The second 45 minute session involves writing, revising, and editing their final draft.

Teachers should provide each student with a paper copy of the student directions for the selected task. Please check with your district to determine if the district has selected a task for the entire district to use. The NDE will not provide printed copies for schools.

Teachers may also provide each student with a copy of the Student Writing Guide that matches the writing mode of the task (i.e. the Grade 8 Student Writing Guide for Argumentative Writing for eighth grade students responding to the eighth grade argumentative tasks). These guides can be found in the Evaluation Guides at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/.

Since the 2015 administration of the Smarter Balanced assessment is computer based, students should use a word processor (i.e., Microsoft Word) to write their responses. Using technology to produce and publish writing is part of the CCS and keyboarding skills are introduced in second grade in the Nevada Computer and Technology Standards (2010).

Students may use spell check and grammar check. They should **not** use any other electronic resources, including the Internet, during the task. If circumstances prohibit the use of computers, then students may write their essays longhand for the 2012-13 school year. After that, all students are expected to word process their responses to the Formative Tasks. Students with IEPs may use pre-approved electronic devices as designated in their IEPs and are consistent with their testing accommodations.

In addition, each student should have at least one blank sheet of paper (lined or unlined) and a pencil. Students can use these tools to plan their writing (i.e., individually brainstorm, create graphic organizers) and create their first drafts. However, students may also word process their first drafts on computers, if they prefer.

Students may also use highlighters and colored pencils for planning, revising, and editing.

Regular paper Standard English dictionaries are also allowed for all fifth and eighth grade students. In addition, paper bilingual dictionaries with word-to-word translations are approved for LEP students identified to receive this accommodation and used previously as part of regular instruction. Teachers do **not** need to cover bulletin boards, posters, or other materials used as part of daily instruction.

Teachers will NOT translate any part of the directions.

Teachers will NOT read any part of the student directions that call for the student to read, unless such accommodations are specified in a student's accommodation plan.

Teacher Checklist for Administering the Writing Tasks

Completing the following steps will help ensure successful administration of the Formative Tasks.

- Carefully read all of the contents of this manual.
- Check your district testing schedule for any specific test dates for your district.
- Check with your district to determine if they have selected a task for the entire district to administer.
- Check with the special education facilitators, LEP testing coordinators, and 504 building officers for any students who need to receive special accommodations.
- Ensure that procedures and materials for testing special student populations follow those specified by the Nevada Department of Education and that students with special needs receive the appropriate accommodations.
- Ensure that you have all of the materials for administering the formative task:
 - ___ Print copies of the student directions
 - ___ Print copies of the Grade 8 Student Guide for Argumentative Writing (optional) (see page 13 in The Nevada Formative Writing Tools: Grade 8 Evaluation Guides at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/)
 - ___ Pencils
 - ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
 - ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
 - ___ Bilingual dictionaries with word-for-word translations (only for LEP students approved to receive this accommodation and who use them as part of their classroom instruction)
 - ___ Highlighters and colored pencils or pens during testing sessions (if students have been using these during regular classroom instruction)
 - ___ Printer paper (optional for printing hard copies of student essays)
 - ___ Books for students to read if they finish early (paper only)
- Check computers to make sure they are ready.
- Check with your school/district for special procedures on how to save essays on the school/district network.
- Review computer procedures with your students:
 - ___ Open a new blank document
 - ___ Maintain default font size and color (i.e., 12 point and black)
 - ___ Save documents
 - ___ Print files
- Make arrangements with another teacher to exchange and evaluate tasks.
- Make plans for how you will provide feedback to students for improving their writing (i.e., conferences).

Teacher Checklist for Evaluating the Writing Tasks

Completing the following steps will help ensure consistent evaluation of the Formative Tasks.

- Work with another teacher so that each student’s essay is evaluated twice.
- Reread the Evaluation Guides (rubric or checklist) for the type of writing that matches the task (opinion/argumentative, informative/explanatory, or narrative) and highlight or underline key information. (Evaluation Guides can be downloaded at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/)
- Reread the exemplar papers for the type of writing that matches the task and review how the characteristics of the paper relate to the level of each trait. (Argumentative Exemplars can be downloaded at http://www.doe.nv.gov/Nevada_State_Writing_Assessment/)
- Read entirely each essay before assigning a level for each of the five traits.
- Refer to the language in the rubric and the exemplar papers when assigning levels.
- Cover the first evaluator’s levels before the essay is evaluated the second time (this is optional but many teachers find it helpful if they don’t know how the first teacher evaluated the papers).
- Discuss the levels, understanding that it is normal for some traits to have some split levels (1-2 or 3-4).
- Discuss any discrepant levels. Levels are discrepant when one teacher evaluates a trait as proficient (4 or 3) and another teacher evaluates that same trait as not proficient (2 or 1).

When a trait is rated 1-3, 1-4, 2-3, or 2-4, both teachers should review the rubric, checklist, and exemplar papers to determine if the paper is proficient or not (for feedback purposes).

Proficient (Meets or Exceeds Standard)		Not Proficient (Below Standard or Emerging/Developing)	
4 Deep Command	3 Sufficient Command	2 Partial Command	1 Limited Command

- Identify trends (i.e., overall, what traits were strong or weak) and how that will impact instruction.
- Prioritize the weakest trends and plan instruction to remediate weaknesses.

Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task A

YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

You will write an argumentative essay about the use of cell phones in school.

STEPS YOU WILL FOLLOW:

1. Read the following pros and cons about cell phone use in schools.
2. Plan and write an argumentative essay, citing evidence from the text.
3. Revise and edit your essay.

STEP 1

Read the following pros and cons about cell phone use in schools. As you read, decide whether cell phones should be used in school. You will use this information to write an argumentative essay.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers can have students use cell phones as an active part of the technological curriculum • Students can take notes on cell phones • Students can use them to access digital school books • Parents can contact their students to ask questions, change plans, etc. • Students can check school event calendars • Students can contact their parents to ask questions, change plans, etc. • Students can reach the authorities or medical providers if in danger • Phones can be silenced during class times and activated only at appropriate times and places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students often forget to turn off their phones during class and the ringing disrupts learning • Text messaging can be considered a kind of high-tech note passing • Cell phones are often used for cheating • Students pay too much attention to their phones and not enough attention to what is going on in class • Excessive cell phone use can overload communication systems in the event of crisis • Cell and text messages add to the spread of rumors and misinformation • The long-term negative physical effects of cell phone use are still undetermined



STEP 2

Plan and write your argumentative essay to make a claim for or against cell phones in school. Your audience may be students, teachers, and community members. Support your claim with well-chosen and cited details from what you have read.

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus—how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims
- Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

END

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task A

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

- ___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task A
- ___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)
- ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
- ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
- ___ Pencils
- ___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an argumentative essay on cell phone use in schools. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read some information about the pros and cons of cell phone use, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

*You have a pencil and blank paper to use for planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud: You will write an argumentative essay about the use of cell phones in school.

Next, find the STEPS YOU WILL FOLLOW section and read along while I read aloud:

1. *Read the following pros and cons about cell phone use in schools.*
2. *Plan and write an argumentative essay, citing evidence from the text.*
3. *Revise and edit your essay.*

Now, find STEP 1. It says: Read the following pros and cons about cell phone use in schools. As you read, decide whether cell phones should be used in school. You will use this information to write an argumentative essay.

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Turn the paper to page 2 and find STEP 2. It says: Plan and write your argumentative essay to make a claim for or against cell phones in school. Your audience may be students, teachers, and community members. Support your claim with well-chosen and cited details from what you have read.

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say: *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says: Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:*

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus— how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*

- Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 on page 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read this information and start planning and drafting your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay. Now read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

- ___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task A
- ___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)
- ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
- ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
- ___ Pencils
- ___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information on pros and cons of using cell phones at school and started planning and drafting an argumentative essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may reread the article and use anything you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says: Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus—how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims
- Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will only read your final draft. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task B

YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

You will write an argumentative essay on helmet use when riding bicycles.

STEPS YOU WILL FOLLOW:

- 1. Read the following letters to the editor about helmet use when riding bicycles.
2. Plan and write an argumentative essay, citing evidence from the text.
3. Revise and edit your essay.

STEP 1

Read the two letters to the editor below. As you read, decide with which side you agree. You will use this information to write an argumentative essay.

Table with 2 columns containing letters to the editor. Left column: 'Dear EDITOR: Every day, children across Nevada put their lives at risk by riding their bicycles without a helmet...' Right column: 'Dear EDITOR: I agree that helmets might help, but they are not the only safety measure that will save everyone who wears one.'



STEP 2

Plan and write your argumentative essay to make a claim for or against helmet use when riding bicycles. Your audience may be students, teachers, and community members. Support your claim with well-chosen and cited details from what you have read.

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus—how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims
- Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

**END**

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task B

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

- ___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task B
- ___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)
- ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
- ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
- ___ Pencils
- ___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an argumentative essay on helmet use when riding bicycles. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read two letters to the editor with different views, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

*You have a pencil and blank paper to use for planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud: You will write an argumentative essay on helmet use when riding bicycles.

Next, find the STEPS YOU WILL FOLLOW section and read along while I read aloud:

- 1. Read the following letters to the editor about helmet use when riding bicycles.*
- 2. Plan and write an argumentative essay, citing evidence from the text.*
- 3. Revise and edit your essay.*

Now, find STEP 1. It says: Read the two letters to the editor below. As you read, decide with which side you agree. You will use this information to write an argumentative essay.

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Turn the paper to page 2 and find STEP 2. It says: Plan and write your argumentative essay to make a claim for or against helmet use when riding bicycles. Your audience may be students, teachers, and community members. Support your claim with well-chosen and cited details from what you have read.

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say: *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says: Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:*

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus— how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*

- Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your argumentative and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 on page 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read this information and start planning and drafting your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay. Now read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

- ___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task B
- ___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)
- ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
- ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
- ___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read two letters to the editor about the use of helmets when riding bicycles and started planning and drafting an argumentative essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may go back and reread the article and use anything you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says: Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus—how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will only read your final draft. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task C

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: You will write an argumentative essay supporting one view on school starting time.

- STEPS YOU WILL FOLLOW:**
1. Read the following information about different school starting times.
 2. Plan and write an argumentative essay, citing evidence from the text.
 3. Revise and edit your essay.

STEP 1

Read the following information about school starting times. As you read, decide whether school should start at 8:00 am or 9:00 am. You will use this information to write an argumentative essay.

8:00am	9:00am
<p>Students and parents advocate the following for schools to stay with an earlier start time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting later will interfere with after-school activities and sports programs • Kids will just stay up later if they begin school later • Changing the start time will require adding buses and an additional \$7 million more per year • Changing the start time will create confusion and a need to reroute buses for all grade levels • Parents in general will have trouble getting their children to school because of work schedules • Beginning later will make it so that students get out of school later 	<p>Sleep studies indicate the following for students who begin school an hour later:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep studies indicate that students who begin later are more alert • School personnel say the cafeteria is calmer throughout the day • Hall monitors say there are fewer fights during passing times between classes • Students say they feel less depressed • Parents say their children are easier to live with • Grades can improve • Students are less likely to fall asleep at their desks • Schools report less tardiness • Schools report that overall attendance improves



STEP 2

Plan and write your argumentative essay to make a claim for when school should start. Your audience may be students, teachers, and community members. Support your claim with well-chosen and cited details from what you have read.

STEP 3

Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- Statement of Purpose/Focus—how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims
- Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

**END**

Directions for Administering the Grade 8 Argumentative Writing Task C

Session 1 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials

Do: Hand out the materials students will need to complete the formative writing task:

- ___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task C
- ___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)
- ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
- ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
- ___ Pencils
- ___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Read the Directions Aloud to the Students

Say: *Over two sessions, you will write an argumentative essay on school start time. During the first session, you will have 45 minutes to read the directions, read contrasting views on middle school start times, read how the teachers will evaluate your essay, and begin planning and drafting your essay. During the second 45 minute session, you will finish drafting your essay and then revise and edit your final draft.*

*You have a pencil and blank paper to use for planning your essay. You may write, highlight, and underline on the student directions paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Find the YOUR ASSIGNMENT section at the top of page 1 of the student directions. Read along while I read aloud: You will write an argumentative essay supporting one view on school starting time.

Next, find the STEPS YOU WILL FOLLOW section and read along while I read aloud:

- 1. Read the following information about different school starting times.*
- 2. Plan and write an argumentative essay, citing evidence from the text.*
- 3. Revise and edit your essay.*

Now, find STEP 1. It says: Read the following information about school starting times. As you read, decide whether school should start at 8:00 am or 9:00 am. You will use this information to write an argumentative essay.

You will read this on your own; I will not read this to you.

Turn the paper to page 2 and find STEP 2. It says: Plan and write your argumentative essay to make a claim for when school should start. Your audience may be students, teachers, and community members. Support your claim with well-chosen and cited details from what you have read.

3. Read the Evaluation Information

Say: *Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says: Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:*

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus— how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*

- Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information
- Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

4. Answer Any Questions

Say: *I can read the directions as often as needed, but I cannot translate, edit your work, explain, or give examples on what or how to write. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Do: Answer questions by rereading the directions.

5. Begin Planning and Drafting

Say: *Now, go back to STEP 1 on page 1 of the student directions sheet. You have 45 minutes to read this information and start planning and drafting your essay.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the first session will end.

Say: *You should think about the information you have read, which should help you write your essay. Now read your assignment and begin your work. Manage your time carefully so that you have time to plan and draft your essay. I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may begin.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

6. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left.*

7. End Session 1

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. Write your name on the top of your directions paper and the scratch paper. You will finish writing your essay during the next session.*

Do: If your next session will start on the next day, collect all materials. If your next session will continue on the same day, provide a 15 minute break before beginning the second session.

Session 2 (45 minutes)

1. Distribute the Materials (if necessary)

Do: Hand out the things students will need:

- ___ Student Directions Argumentative Writing Task C
- ___ Grade 8 Student Guide to Argumentative Writing (optional)
- ___ Standard English dictionaries (optional)
- ___ Blank scratch paper (lined or unlined)
- ___ Pencils

___ Highlighters, colored pencils or pens (optional)

2. Review the Directions

Say: *During the first session, you read some information on contrasting views on middle school start times and started planning and drafting an argumentative essay. Now, you will have 45 minutes to review, revise, and edit your essay. You may go back and reread the article and use anything you wrote on your scratch paper. You will write your essay using the word processor on the computer. You may use spell check and grammar check. However, you may **not** use any other programs on the computer, and you may **not** use the Internet.*

Let's review how your essay will be evaluated and then you can reread your essay and begin revising and editing. Find STEP 3 and read along as I tell you how your essay will be evaluated. It says: Revise and edit your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will be assigning levels for:

- *Statement of Purpose/Focus—how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate or opposing claims*
- *Organization—how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions, and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay*
- *Elaboration of Evidence—how well you provide evidence from sources about your claim and elaborate with specific information*
- *Language and Vocabulary—how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose*
- *Conventions—how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling*

Teachers reading your essay will evaluate only your final draft.

3. Reread, Revise, and Edit

Say: *Now, continue working on your essay. The teachers evaluating your essay will only read your final draft. Manage your time carefully so that you can reread the essay you started during the last session, finish any drafting, and revise and edit for your final draft.*

Do: Write the ending time on the board to let students know when the second session will end.

Say: *I'll announce when you have 10 minutes left. You may continue writing your essay now.*

Do: Start timing now. Monitor the class to ensure students are working productively, not using any other programs on the computer, and not using the Internet.

If students finish early, encourage them to reread their work or silently read a book.

4. Announce 10 Minutes Remaining

Say: *You have 10 minutes left. Please work quickly to finish your final draft. Remember, teachers reading your essay will only evaluate the final draft.*

5. End Session 2

Say: *Please stop writing. Save your work on the computer. I will collect your pencils and scratch paper.*

Do: Collect student writing by asking students to print their essays, or email them to you, or drop them in your virtual inbox.

Teaching Tips

Citing/Using Evidence

Students need ample practice in using evidence to support their opinions/arguments with reasons and details. It is never acceptable to simply copy verbatim from a text as their reasons or details. While students are not expected to use formal citations (i.e. APA or MLA) on the Formative Tasks, it is important that they acknowledge the source of their evidence because citing sources gives credibility to their opinion and makes for proficient writing. Appropriate phrases might include: "According to the table..." or "Scientists found..." Students may also use parenthetical citations, such as, (Pros column). Students may reference their experiences as an elaborative technique, such as, "On a trip to the beach I discovered..."

Highlighters to the Rescue!

Teach students to use highlighters, colored pencils, or colored pens to emphasize important information as they read. At first it may be tempting for them to highlight everything, since it all seems important. But be patient and model the process a few times.

1. Look briefly over the entire book, article, or assignment to get a feel for its structure and how it is organized.
2. Pay particular attention to introductory and concluding paragraphs. These often contain summaries of important points.
3. Look for certain words and phrases that can tip you off that something important is coming up, such as "In sum," "The point is," "Most importantly," and so on.
4. Consider reading the conclusion first. It's like doing a maze backwards: If you know where you're trying to end up, you can find and understand the path better.
5. Look back over the book, article, or assignment the next day, reading only the highlighted material.



Elaborating Information in Tables

Tables and charts can provide a lot of information. Unfortunately, when students are writing opinions, arguments, or informative/explanatory essays using information from tables and charts, they do not elaborate. Simply repeating something from a chart is not very interesting. Teach students elaborative techniques such as adding sensory details, adding anecdotes, providing examples, and giving reasons. Students can become better writers by employing elaborative techniques that take their writing from mundane to interesting and even exciting!

To Title or Not to Title

Students often ask, "Does my essay need a title?" Confront this issue while you are teaching and before you administer the formative tasks. Although the rubric does not specifically reference a title, teach students how to write effective and engaging titles.

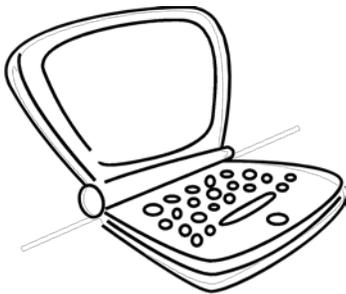
On-Demand Writing

Remind students that authors write for different purposes. During instruction, there are definitely times when it is important for writers to take a piece through the entire writing process. However, the formative assessments are designed as “on-demand” writing, to see how well students can write to an assigned task in a finite amount of time. This is an important skill as on-demand writing will often be required of them in the college and career world. In on-demand writing, students need to be able to go from their pre-writing/brainstorming to drafting on computer, rather than a paper/pencil created draft. Be sure to incorporate opportunities for on-demand writing in regular instruction so it is not a surprise to students when they take the Formative Tasks.



Word Processing

Be sure students have ample practice and feel confident with the word processing program they will be using for the formative assessments. It is important students are familiar with how to save their documents and use the spell check and grammar check features. Ample practice drafting, re-reading, revising, and editing on-screen will also be beneficial for students so these become comfortable and expected parts of the writing process.



Word processing programs come with many bells and whistles that can enhance the publishing process. However, it is important during the Formative Tasks that students are focused on their writing and not wasting valuable time playing with features such as font and colors. While there are no specific guidelines in these areas for the assessment, it is important students understand the focus of the task is their actual writing. Teachers may want to establish their own parameters for font size/type. Only spell check and grammar check features are permitted.

Collecting the Finished Tasks

Consider setting up a shared drive where students can save their word-processed final drafts. Create folders for each of your classes on this drive. When students save their essays, have them name their file with their last name and first initial (i.e., Jamie Martinez = martinezj). The names will appear alphabetically in the file and make it easy for both you and the student to locate.

Meet with Your Colleagues

Plan to meet with colleagues after scoring all of the papers for your grade. Start a discussion about writing trends. What are some things that are working well? What are some areas that need to be addressed? Create a plan that maintains what is working well and addresses areas that need improving.

About the Nevada Department of Education

The vision of the Nevada Department of Education is *Success through Learning*.

Mission

The Nevada Department of Education's mission is to elevate student performance by ensuring opportunity, facilitating learning, and promoting excellence.

The mission will be accomplished by focusing work on a set of key policy levers:

- Standards, data systems and accountability measures;
- Human capital;
- Responsible competition; and
- Managerial excellence and resource allocation.

State Educational Goals: 2020

1. Elevate student achievement results for all students
2. Improve the graduation rate including expanding the advanced diploma rate
3. Ensure college and career readiness when students graduate from high school
4. Ensure Nevada's students are educated by effective teachers and administrators
5. Support and expand innovative programs to improve learning
6. Increase productivity and return on investment

Strategies

The Nevada Department of Education, in cooperation with the Charter School Authority, will pursue its mission and achieve its goals with four major strategies:

1. Implement Standards and Assessments
2. Classify, Reward, and Support School, District and State Performance
3. Facilitate High Impact Instruction and Leadership
4. Achieve Management Integrity within the Education Department

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