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ABSTRACT

This update provides information for implementing the Nebraska Statewide Writing Assessment. It is intended to assist local educators in planning and preparing for the writing assessment being initiated in all public schools in Nebraska in grades 4, 8, and 11 in February 2001. The update continues the series of materials provided by the Nebraska State Department of Education to assist in the implementation of the School-Based Teacher-Led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS). The update contains these chapters: (1) "Statewide Writing Assessment Parameters"; (2) "Implementation Procedures"; (3) "Writing Accommodations"; (4) "Good Teaching Practices"; (5) "Inclusion of English Language Learner Guidelines"; (6) "Modes for Writing"; (7) "Sample Prompts for Writing"; (8) "Six Traits of Writing"; and (9) "Scoring Guides and Process." (SLD)

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STARS

School-based
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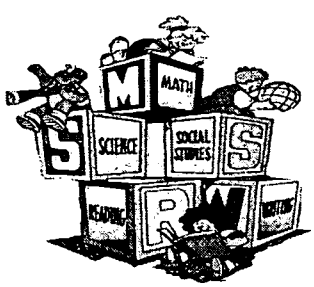
Update #3
Writing Assessment
September 2000



Nebraska Department of Education

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PURPOSE OF STARS UPDATE #3

This Update provides information for implementing the Nebraska Statewide Writing Assessment. It is intended to assist local educators in planning and preparing for the writing assessment being initiated in all public schools in grades 4, 8, and 11 in February 2001.

This update continues the series of materials provided by the Nebraska Department of Education to assist in the implementation of the School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS). The series includes:

- Nebraska School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting Systems (STARS) Guide of October 1999
- STARS Toolkit distributed in December 1999 (No longer in print)
- STARS Update #1 in May 2000 (Moving Forward With Assessment)
- STARS Update #2 in August 2000 (A STARS Summary)

Schools are encouraged to maintain the complete set of the STARS Guide and Updates for reference in local planning.

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Appendix A

PARAMETERS FOR THE NEBRASKA WRITING ASSESSMENT

A. Statutory Requirements

Legislative Bill 812, passed in spring 2000, amended 79-760 to require that. . . "The state board shall prescribe statewide assessments of writing that rely on writing samples beginning in the spring of 2001 with students in each three grades selected by the state board. For each academic year thereafter, one of the three selected grades shall participate in the statewide writing assessment."

B. Purpose

The Statewide Writing Assessment is intended to:

1. Gather information to assist teachers in determining the progress of students in meeting state or local standards for writing.

2. Provide each local school district with a report of student progress in meeting state or local standards for writing.

3. Through a representative sample, provide a means of determining statewide progress of students in achieving state standards for writing.

4. Lead to improved writing by Nebraska students.

C. Criteria

The Statewide Writing Assessment is being designed to:

1. Align closely with classroom instructional practices so that the assessment is conducted as a regular classroom activity rather than as an unrelated "add on" to the instructional program.

2. Support and model effective practices for assessing student writing.

3. Be conducted in a consistent manner in each school district using the same procedures.

4. Provide opportunity for regional scoring, but also provide opportunity for local scoring to:

   - Strengthen local knowledge of quality writing
   - Expand assessment skills
   - Support internal accountability

   (Criteria 4 above applies to the pilot year of 2000-01 and may be modified based upon a review of pilot year procedures.)

D. Participants and Assessment Schedule:

2001 (**Pilot Year**) – Grades 4, 8, and 11

2002 – Grade 4

2003 – Grade 8

2004 – Grade 11

E. 2001- Pilot Year

- Provides opportunities for refinement of procedures
- Extends time for local staff development in writing assessment
- And. . .Local districts will **not** report scores to the State

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

The following outline summarizes procedures for implementation of the Writing Assessment in Nebraska Schools.

A. Writing Assessment Time Line

- **By December 1, 2000** –Writing Assessment Administration Manual will be distributed to local districts (This will include a Statement of Intent for schools to return to NDE to indicate whether they wish to score the Writing Assessment locally or submit papers to a regional scoring center.)
- **By January 1, 2000** -- Nebraska schools return a Statement of Intent indicating if student papers are to be scored locally or regionally.
- **January 15, 2001** – Student assessment materials will be mailed to each local district
- **February 5-23, 2001** – Time Frame for local administration of the Writing Assessment
- **March-April, 2001** – Scoring will take place at regional scoring sites

B. Use of Writing Prompts

1. The writing prompts will establish the purpose and context for the writing.
2. Students will write on one prompt at each grade level.
3. The prompts will be provided to schools by the Nebraska Department of Education. (See page 11 for additional information.)

C. Modes for Writing

1. Students in **Grade 4** will write in the **narrative** mode.
2. Students in **Grade 8** will write in the **descriptive** mode.
3. Students in **Grade 11** will write in the **persuasive** mode.

D. Length of Time for Writing

Students will complete the writing assessment during **timed sessions on two consecutive days**.

Day 1 – 30 minutes (35 minutes for Grade 4) is for:

- Prewriting activities (note taking, outlining, clustering, mapping, etc.)
- Generating preliminary drafts

Day 2 – 30 minutes (35 minutes for Grade 4) is for:

- Revising
- Editing
- Writing the final draft

E. Scoring Procedures

1. Scoring Guides – Grade level appropriate and mode specific scoring guides will be used. The scoring guide is a one-page document that includes the **scoring criteria** and the **performance levels**. (The actual scoring guides are included in Appendix A.)

2. Scoring Criteria – The scoring criteria will be based on six traits of writing. (These are: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions.)

3. Scoring Process

   - Writing will be scored holistically (the writing is evaluated as a whole rather than on its individual components).
   - Each student's writing will be read and scored by two readers.

F. Local Scoring

1. Districts will have the opportunity to score their own papers using the Statewide Writing Assessment scoring guides.

2. Local scoring will help district staff to gain knowledge and insights into the writing assessment process.

3. Local scores will not be reported to the State in the 2001 pilot year.

G. Regional Scoring

1. Regional scoring will take place at the following sites:

   - ESU #3 - Omaha
   - ESU #10 - Kearney
   - ESU #13 - Scottsbluff

2. Scoring will be conducted by experienced educators.

3. Training for scoring will be provided at each scoring site.

H. Out-of-State Scoring

1. A stratified sample of student writing assessments will be collected and scored by an out-of-state agency.

2. This sample will provide an aggregate score for the 2001 State Report Card.

I. Reporting

1. Statewide. The 2001 State Report Card will include an aggregate statewide score based on the random sample of Nebraska student scores.

2. Local District. School districts will report local results in annual performance reports to district patrons.

NEBRASKA STATEWIDE WRITING ASSESSMENT ALLOWABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

For students with disabilities, English language learners, and students with 504 plans

Writing Assessment Administration

Type of Adaptation	Standard Administration Allowable Accommodations	Modified Administration
Changes in timing or scheduling of the assessment	• Extended time • Frequent breaks • Administer at time of day most beneficial to student	
Changes in how the writing prompts and instructions are presented	• Large print version of prompts • Braille version of prompts • Sign writing prompts ++ • Translate key words in prompts • Visual magnification devices • Auditory amplification devices, noise buffers • Tactile representation of charts, pictures, tables, graphs, etc. • Bilingual dictionaries	
Changes in how the student responds	• Increased spacing, wider lines and/or margins • Respond to writing in Braille * ** • Students with physical disabilities (i.e. blindness, deafness, and orthopedic impairments) should be allowed any assistive device that serves as their primary communication mode if no other options are available to express their performance. Word processing or typewriting are not allowed under any other conditions.	• Dictate response to a scribe • Tape-record writing response to be transcribed for scoring

* If a student will be responding in Braille, please inform the school assessment coordinator and identify that student's assessment materials packet so that it can be appropriately reviewed.

** Students using Braille need to follow the same writing process as in a standard administration (no allowance of electronic spell checker, grammar checker, or any other "help" feature on a word processor) and have the composition transcribed to English text before submitting it for evaluation.

++ Signing writing prompts must be done carefully. Some signs may be an interpretation of the answer or concept tested. In such cases finger spelling may be more appropriate.

GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES WHICH APPLY TO ALL STUDENTS IN CONDUCTING WRITING ASSESSMENT

- Reread directions to student
- Clarify directions
- Highlight words in directions
- Auditory amplification devices, hearing aides, noise buffers
- Translate directions orally

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE INCLUSION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS IN SCHOOL-BASED TEACHER-LED ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING SYSTEM

In determining which English Language Learners (ELLs) participate in the STARS assessment, it is the goal of the Nebraska Department of Education to allow school districts a degree of flexibility. The following chart delineates the options available to school districts as they assess ELLs.

English Language Learners	District Options		
Year(s) in a Nebraska School District*	**Alternate Assessment for English Language Learners**	**Assessment with Accommodations**	**Assessment without Accommodations**
Year 1 – Non-English speakers	X	X	X
Years 2-3		X	X
Year 4+			X

*Year(s) in a Nebraska School District – The amount of time a student has spent in any Nebraska school district

Criteria for an Alternate Assessment

Non-English speaking students who participate in an ***alternate curriculum*** designed to teach the English language may also participate in an alternate assessment. It is anticipated that for most non-English speaking students, an alternate assessment would be necessary only during the first year of enrollment in the school district. When considering an alternate assessment, a school district should consider the following factors:

- Providing an Alternate Curriculum
  Students should also be served in an alternate curriculum designed to teach the English language. This could include program models such as English as a Second Language (ESL), bilingual, Dual Language Bilingual, and Sheltered English.

- Determining English language proficiency
  An alternate assessment should only be administered for ELLs who are considered non-English speakers (and not limited or fluent English speakers)

An assessment that is specifically designed to measure English language proficiency should be used to determine if the student is a non-English speaker. Some examples of tests that do so include the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT), the Woodcock-Munoz, and the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT).

- Providing Alternate Assessments for meeting state or local standards
  There are a variety of alternate assessments that are appropriate for English language learners. Some alternate assessments to consider include:
  - Portfolio collections of student work
  - Performance assessment
  - Classroom assessment
  - District checklists
  - Language assessment tests

- Considerations for Native Language Assessments
  - Some norm-referenced tests are available in other languages (such as Spanish). School districts may also consider administering criterion-referenced tests in the student's home language.
  - Such alternate assessments may not be beneficial to ELLs if the student has not had the opportunity to learn material being assessed in the native language.
  - If native language assessments are conducted, staff involved in the assessment process must be adequately prepared and trained in the assessment procedures.

Providing Assessment with Accommodations

Assessment accommodations are changes in testing materials or procedures that enable students to participate in an assessment in a way that allows them to demonstrate what they know. When ELLs participate in norm-referenced testing, the district should consult the test publisher to determine which accommodations are allowable and do not change the meaning of the scores. Accommodations on criterion-referenced tests may not change the meaning of the student scores as determined by the district.

Providing Assessment without Accommodations

The following ELLs must be tested without accommodations when ***either*** of these criteria is met:

1. The ELL has met the criteria for participation based on the district assessment plan **OR**
2. The ELL has been in any Nebraska school district for more than 3 years. For ELLs who also have a Special Education IEP, participation will be determined by the IEP team and as stated in their IEP or 504 plan.

MODES FOR WRITING*

Students in Grades 4, 8, and 11 will participate in the Statewide Writing Assessment in February 2001. Each grade will use a specific mode or form of writing.

- Students in **Grade 4** will write in the **narrative** mode;
- Students in **Grade 8** will write in the **descriptive** mode; and
- Students in **Grade 11** will write in the **persuasive** mode.

Descriptions of Writing Modes		
Mode	**Purpose**	**Common Examples**
Narrative	Tells a story and provides important facts and details	Novels, short stories, narrative picture books, plays, diaries, news stories, biographies, histories
Descriptive	Creates a word picture in the reader's mind, using sensory details to describe an object, person or place	Catalogs, travel brochures, personality sketches, essays
Persuasive	Intended to convince the reader that a certain point of view is the right one, or that some action should be taken	Reviews of books, theater, film, etc.; editorials, political position papers, advertisements

* Other modes or forms for writing which may also be a part of any classroom writing curriculum could include expository, technical and business writing. Students should have opportunities to learn and practice writing in a variety of modes.

SAMPLE PROMPTS FOR WRITING

The prompts below are examples to illustrate the modes for writing. They provide examples for teachers and students. They are not the actual prompts that will be used in the Statewide Writing Assessment.

Narrative Writing – Example Prompts:

Think of a place that is special to you. It might be as big as a city or as small as a corner of a room. Write one story that comes to mind when you think of this place.

Think of your best or worst day at school. Write a story telling what happened on that day.

Write a story about a time when a family member or a friend did something surprising or something unexpected.

Descriptive Writing – Example Prompts:

Think of an object that is important to you, something that has become part of your life or reminds you of a person, place, or time that you like to remember. Describe this object in such a way that the reader will be able to understand why it is important to you.

Think of a place that's special to you. It might be as big as a city or as small as a corner of a room. Describe this place in such a way that someone else will be able to understand why it is special to you.

Think of a person you have known who has been important to you. Describe this person in such a way that someone who doesn't know him or her will be able to understand why he or she is important to you.

Persuasive Writing – Example Prompts:

Much has been written about the negative effects of television on children, yet some people feel that television is a valuable educational tool. Think about your opinion of television in general. Write an essay in which you try to convince your reader to agree with your opinion about whether television is harmful or helpful to young people.

Members of your local board of education are planning to review your school's current open/closed lunch policy. They have asked for student recommendations on this issue as they make their final decision. Write an essay in which you state your opinion on whether your school should have an open or closed lunch policy. Be sure to support your opinions with reasons and examples.

Often teenagers believe there is a need for more recreational opportunities in their communities. Write an essay in which you give reasons or examples to community leaders on why they should consider adopting or implementing plans to create more recreational opportunities for teenagers in your community.

SIX TRAITS OF WRITING

IDEAS	Has clarity, fresh perspective, important details that go beyond the obvious
ORGANIZATION	Has order and logic, clear connections to the main idea, inviting, attention-getting lead, graceful ending
VOICE	Is appropriate for the topic, audience and purpose; brings topic to life, has the mark of a particular writer
WORD CHOICE	Creates word pictures, relies on strong verbs and precise nouns; does not try to impress with jargon or overblown language; avoids redundancy
SENTENCE FLUENCY	Is easy to read aloud, inviting; has varied sentence length and structure, purposeful sentence beginnings
CONVENTIONS	Looks clean, edited, proofread; has no glaring errors that distract the reader, specifically: - spelling correct on simple words, correct or close on difficult words - ending punctuation correct; internal punctuation not misleading - paragraphs for new topics, new speakers - quotation marks to denote dialogue - capital letters to begin all proper nouns and all sentences - noun-verb agreement - no arbitrary shifts in tense

NEBRASKA WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORING GUIDES AND PROCESS

Content of the Scoring Guides -- The scoring guides contained in Appendix A are the actual guides that will be used for the Nebraska Statewide Writing Assessment. Teachers at all levels and in all subject areas may find them helpful for classroom writing instruction and assessment. The scoring guides are similar to those often used in teaching and assessing student writing. They have been developed through extensive research and refined with the input of Nebraska teachers.

- The scoring guides are grade level specific and mode specific.
- The scoring guides contain:
  - The scoring criteria – based upon six traits of writing (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions)
  - Four levels of performance, ranging from 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest
  - Indicators of the traits for each performance level

Scoring Process

- The scoring process will be holistic (based on the overall effect achieved by the writing rather than on its individual components)
- Each student's writing is read and scored by two readers

Note: Local classroom assessment often includes analytical scoring (scoring each trait to analyze individual student progress). The statewide assessment, however, is intended to determine the overall progress of Nebraska students and will be holistic.

APPENDIX A

SCORING GUIDES

Appendix A provides the actual scoring guides that will be used for the Nebraska Statewide Writing Assessment.

GRADE 4 -NEBRASKA SCORING GUIDE FOR NARRATIVE WRITING

	1	2	3	4
IDEAS AND CONTENT	• creates little, if any, picture of the situation being described • severe digressions from the prompt • lacks supporting details • is repetitious, disconnected, or seemingly random	• creates a somewhat confusing picture of the situation being described • notable digressions from the prompt • contains limited, unclear details • displays a vague storyline	• creates a general picture of the situation being described • exhibits some digressions from the prompt • contains some relevant details • narrative is acceptable, if not distinctive	• creates a clear picture of the situation being described • is well-focused on prompt • contains numerous, relevant details • narrative is distinctive in its approach
ORGANIZATION	• structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is not identifiable • sequencing is almost non-existent • pacing is awkward • transitions are missing	• structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is not readily apparent • sequencing often lacks coherence • pacing is inconsistent • transitions are often repetitious or missing	• structural development includes a beginning, middle, and end • sequencing is somewhat logical and effective • pacing is fairly well-controlled • transitions are generally effective	• structural development includes an effective beginning, middle, and end • sequencing is logical and effective • pacing is well-controlled • transitions clearly show how ideas connect
VOICE	• conveys almost no sense of the person behind the words • uses bland and boring tone • is lifeless and/or mechanical	• seldom conveys a sense of the person behind the words • generally lacks tone appropriate for purpose and audience • frequently seems lifeless and/or mechanical	• conveys some general sense of the person behind the words • generally uses tone appropriate for purpose and audience • is occasionally individualistic, expressive, and engaging	• conveys a strong sense of the person behind the words • uses tone appropriate for the purpose and audience • is frequently individualistic, expressive, and engaging
WORD CHOICE	• uses language that is neither specific nor precise • displays an abundance of misused and overused words and phrases • exhibits limited vocabulary • uses clichés and jargon rather than original language	• uses language that is occasionally specific and precise • displays language that often seems forced or contrived for this purpose and audience • uses few vivid words and phrases • some overuse of clichés and jargon	• uses language that is usually specific and precise • displays language that occasionally seems forced or contrived for this purpose and audience • uses some vivid words and phrases • generally avoids clichés and jargon	• uses language that is specific and precise • displays language that seems natural and appropriate to the purpose and audience • effectively uses vivid words and phrases • avoids clichés and jargon
SENTENCE FLUENCY	• uses sentences that almost never vary in length or structure • uses phrasing that is choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward • unintentional fragments confuse the reader • dialogue, if present, is used inappropriately	• uses sentences that seldom vary in length or structure • uses phrasing that often seems rambling, forced, or contrived • fragments, if present, often confuse the reader • dialogue, if present, tends to sound unnatural	• uses sentences that vary somewhat in length and structure • uses phrasing that usually sounds natural and conveys meaning • fragments, if present, usually add style • dialogue, if present, usually sounds natural	• uses sentences of varying length and structure • uses phrasing that sounds natural and conveys meaning • fragments, if present, add style • dialogue, if present, sounds natural
CONVENTIONS	• paragraphing is missing, irregular, or too frequent • errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling distract the reader	• paragraphing, if attempted, is weak • errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling appear frequently	• attempts at paragraphing are mostly successful • there are a few errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling—especially with more sophisticated words and concepts.	• paragraphing is sound • grammar and usage are correct • punctuation is generally correct • conventions—especially grammar and spelling—may be manipulated for stylistic effect

GRADE 8 - NEBRASKA SCORING GUIDE FOR DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

	1	2	3	4
IDEAS AND CONTENT	• creates little, if any picture of the situation being described • severe digressions from the prompt • lacks supporting details • is repetitious, disconnected, or seemingly random	• creates a somewhat confusing picture of the situation being described • notable digressions from the prompt • contains limited, unclear details • description is vague	• creates a general picture of the situation being described • exhibits some digressions from the prompt • contains some relevant details • description is acceptable, if not distinctive	• creates a clear picture of the situation being described • is well-focused on prompt • contains numerous, relevant details • description is distinctive in its approach
ORGANIZATION	• structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is not identifiable • sequencing is almost non-existent • pacing is awkward • transitions are missing	• structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is not readily apparent • sequencing often lacks coherence • pacing is inconsistent • transitions are often repetitious or missing	• structural development includes a beginning, middle, and end • sequencing is somewhat logical and effective • pacing is fairly well-controlled • transitions are generally effective	• structural development includes an effective beginning, middle, and end • sequencing is logical and effective • pacing is well-controlled • transitions clearly show how ideas connect
VOICE	• conveys almost no sense of the person behind the words • uses bland and boring tone • is lifeless and/or mechanical	• seldom conveys a sense of the person behind the words • generally lacks tone appropriate for purpose and audience • frequently seems lifeless and/or mechanical	• conveys some general sense of the person behind the words • generally uses tone appropriate for purpose and audience • is occasionally individualistic, expressive, and engaging	• conveys a strong sense of the person behind the words • uses tone appropriate for the purpose and audience • is frequently individualistic, expressive, and engaging
WORD CHOICE	• uses language that is neither specific nor precise • displays an abundance of misused and overused words and phrases • exhibits limited vocabulary • uses clichés and jargon rather than original language	•uses language that is occasionally specific and precise • displays language that often seems forced or contrived for this purpose and audience • uses few vivid words and phrases • some overuse of clichés and jargon	• uses language that is usually specific and precise • displays language that occasionally seems forced or contrived for this purpose and audience • uses some vivid words and phrases • generally avoids clichés and jargon	• uses language that is specific and precise • displays language that seems natural and appropriate to the purpose and audience • effectively uses vivid words and phrases • avoids clichés and jargon
SENTENCE FLUENCY	• uses sentences that almost never vary in length or structure • uses phrasing that is choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward • unintentional fragments confuse the reader • dialogue, if present, is used inappropriately	• uses sentences that seldom vary in length or structure • uses phrasing that often seems rambling, forced, or contrived • fragments, if present, often confuse the reader • dialogue, if present, tends to sound unnatural	• uses sentences that vary somewhat in length and structure • uses phrasing that usually sounds natural and conveys meaning • fragments, if present, usually add style • dialogue, if present, usually sounds natural	• uses sentences of varying length and structure • uses phrasing that sounds natural and conveys meaning • fragments, if present, add style • dialogue, if present, sounds natural
CONVENTIONS	• paragraphing is missing, irregular, or too frequent • errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling distract the reader	• paragraphing, if attempted, is weak • errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling appear frequently	• attempts at paragraphing are mostly successful • there are a few errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling—especially with more sophisticated words and concepts.	• paragraphing is sound • grammar and usage are correct • punctuation is generally correct • conventions—especially grammar and spelling—may be manipulated for stylistic effect

GRADE 11 - NEBRASKA SCORING GUIDE FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING

	1	2	3	4
IDEAS AND CONTENT	• creates little, if any understanding of the author's opinion • severe digressions from the prompt • lacks supporting examples • is repetitious, disconnected, or seemingly random	• creates a limited understanding of the author's opinion • exhibits notable digressions from the prompt • contains loosely-related, supporting examples • displays few persuasive arguments	• creates a general understanding of the author's opinion • exhibits some digressions from the prompt • contains some relevant, supporting examples • arguments are acceptable, if not distinctive	• clearly conveys author's opinion • is well-focused on prompt • contains numerous, relevant, supporting examples • is distinctive in its approach
ORGANIZATION	• structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is not identifiable • sequencing is almost non-existent • pacing is awkward • transitions are missing	• structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is not readily apparent • sequencing often lacks coherence • pacing is inconsistent • transitions are often repetitious or missing	• structural development includes an introduction, body, and conclusion • sequencing is somewhat logical, rational, and effective • pacing is fairly well-controlled • transitions are generally effective	• structural development includes an effective introduction, body, and conclusion • sequencing is logical, rational, and effective • pacing is well-controlled • transitions clearly show how ideas connect
VOICE	• fails to show commitment to the topic • is not individualistic, expressive, or engaging • uses tone inappropriate for purpose and audience • anticipates few, if any, of readers' questions	• shows minimal commitment to the topic • is seldom individualistic, expressive, and engaging • generally lacks tone appropriate for purpose and audience • anticipates some of the readers' questions	• shows some commitment to the topic • is occasionally individualistic, expressive, and engaging • generally uses tone appropriate for purpose and audience •anticipates many of readers' questions	• shows a strong commitment to the topic • is frequently individualistic, expressive, and engaging • uses tone appropriate for purpose and audience • anticipates readers' questions
WORD CHOICE	• uses language that is neither specific nor precise • displays an abundance of misused and overused words and phrases • exhibits limited vocabulary • uses clichés and jargon rather than original language	• uses language that is occasionally specific and precise • displays language that often seems forced or contrived for this purpose and audience • uses few vivid words and phrases • some overuse of clichés and jargon	• uses language that is usually specific and precise • displays language that occasionally seems forced or contrived for this purpose and audience • uses some vivid words and phrases • generally avoids clichés and jargon	• uses language that is specific and precise • displays language that seems natural and appropriate to the purpose and audience • effectively uses vivid words and phrases • avoids clichés and jargon
SENTENCE FLUENCY	• uses sentences that almost never vary in length or structure • uses phrasing that is choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward • unintentional fragments confuse the reader • dialogue, if present, is used inappropriately	• uses sentences that seldom vary in length or structure • employs phrasing that often seems rambling, forced, or contrived • fragments, if present, often confuse the reader • dialogue, if present, tends to sound unnatural	• uses sentences that vary somewhat in length and structure • uses phrasing that usually sounds natural and conveys meaning • fragments, if present, usually add style • dialogue, if present, usually sounds natural	• uses sentences of varying length and structure • uses phrasing that sounds natural and conveys meaning • fragments, if used, add style • dialogue, if present, sounds natural
CONVENTIONS	• paragraphing is missing, irregular, or too frequent • errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling distract the reader	• paragraphing, if attempted, is weak • errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling appear frequently	• attempts at paragraphing are mostly successful • there are a few errors in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling—especially with more sophisticated words and concepts	• paragraphing is sound • grammar and usage are correct • punctuation is generally correct • conventions—especially grammar and spelling—may be manipulated for stylistic effect

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