New England Common Assessment Program

Released Items Support Materials 2008

Grade 8 Writing

7.9.1 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by applying rules of standard English usage to correct grammatical errors

1. What is the correct form of the underlined word in the sentence below?

> Last year, the whale <u>swims</u> back and forth in the channel.

A. swim
B. swam
C. swimming
D. swum

7.9.2 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by <u>applying capitalization rules</u>

2. Which word in the sentence below should be capitalized?

> According to scientists from NASA, the planet most likely to be the home of some new form of life is mars.

A. scientists
B. planet
C. home
D. mars

7.1.1 Students demonstrate command of the structures of sentences, paragraphs, and text by using varied sentence length and structure to enhance meaning (e.g., including phrases and clauses)

3 What is the **best** way to combine the two sentences below?

Some icebergs are called "growlers." They make a noise as they melt.

A. As some icebergs melt they are called "growlers" and make a noise.
B. Since some icebergs are called "growlers" they make a noise when they melt.
C. Some icebergs are called "growlers" because they make a noise as they melt.
D. Some icebergs are called "growlers," make a noise, and melt.

7.9.5 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by correctly spelling grade-appropriate, high-frequency words and applying conventional spelling patterns/rules

4 How should the underlined word in the sentence below be spelled?

Diamonds wouldn't be valueable if they were easy to find.

A. valuable
B. valuible
C. valuabel
D. valueble

7.9.4 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by applying appropriate punctuation to various sentence patterns to enhance meaning

5 Where should a semicolon (;) be placed in the sentence below?

> Truffles are mushrooms that are very expensive true food lovers pay almost anything to add them to soups and sauces.

A. after *mushrooms*
B. after *expensive*
C. after *pay*
D. after *anything*

7.9.2 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by applying capitalization rules

6 Which word in the sentence below should be capitalized?

> In geography, I learned that the Mississippi river flows south to the ocean.

A. geography
B. river
C. south
D. ocean

7.9.5 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by correctly spelling grade-appropriate, high-frequency words and applying conventional spelling patterns/rules

7 Which edit is needed in the sentence below?

> I asked the principle of my school if there was a possibility I could wait until tomorrow.

A. Change ***principle*** to **principal**.
B. Change ***possibility*** to **possability**.
C. Change ***wait*** to **weight**.
D. Change ***tomorrow*** to **tommorrow**.

7.9.1 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by applying rules of standard English usage to correct grammatical errors

8 Which of the following is a run-on sentence?

A. Hundreds of old steam engines have been restored and now operate at railroad museums.
B. During the 1900s, however, many new forms of transportation were invented and became popular.
C. Because the population of the United States grew dramatically, people settled in many new areas.
D. The 1800s were called the Age of Steam most people in the United States traveled on steam railroads.

7.1.1 Students demonstrate command of the structures of sentences, paragraphs, and text by using varied sentence length and structure to enhance meaning (e.g., including phrases and clauses)

9 What is the **best** way to combine the two sentences below?

The search was difficult. Several factors made it difficult.

A. The search was difficult and several factors made it difficult.
B. With several factors, the search was difficult.
C. Several factors made the search difficult.
D. The search was difficult, several factors made it difficult.

7.9.4 In independent writing, students demonstrate command of appropriate English conventions by applying appropriate punctuation to various sentence patterns to enhance meaning

10 Which edit is needed in the sentence below?

The gorilla's lives became much happier when the zoo's officials created an area with thousands of plants from their native environment.

A. Change ***gorilla's*** to **gorillas'**.
B. Change ***zoo's*** to **zoos**.
C. Change ***officials*** to **official's**.
D. Change ***thousands*** to **thousands'**.

Little Willy

Writing in Response to Literary Text

(The passage for this prompt is located in Released Items 2008—Grade 8 Writing.)

7.3.2 In response to literary or informational text, students make and support analytical judgments about text by making inferences about the relationship(s) among content, events, characters, setting, theme, or author's craft

11 Write a paragraph that explains the relationship between Willy and his grandfather. Include details from the passage to support your response.

Scoring Guide:

Score	Description
4	Response provides a clear explanation of the relationship between Willy and his grandfather. The paragraph maintains a focus/purpose throughout, includes relevant supporting details, and is well-organized. The response includes a variety of correct sentence structures and demonstrates sustained control of grade-appropriate grammar, usage, and mechanics.
3	Response provides a general explanation of the relationship between Willy and his grandfather. The paragraph maintains a focus/purpose, but there may be minor lapses. The response includes some supporting details and is generally well-organized. The response includes some sentence variety and demonstrates general control of grade-appropriate grammar, usage, and mechanics.
2	Response is an attempt at a paragraph that describes the relationship between Willy and his grandfather. The response contains major lapses in focus/purpose and/or few relevant supporting details from the passage. The response includes some attempt at sentence variety and may demonstrate inconsistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.
1	Response may be unclear and/or a minimal attempt to explain the relationship.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response

Score Point 4

11

The relationship between Willy and his grandfather is strong and real. They must have been very close before Willy's grandfather stopped talking because they can still communicate effectively. I think their relationship is full of love and support. Willy looks up to his grandfather. He is looking to become a good harmonica player like him. Willy also tries to impress grandfather. Even though Willy played off hey, grandfather urged him to continue. This shows his patience, love and support for his grandchild. It's obvious that Willy loves his grandfather. He gets real excited when he and his grandfather figure out a way to communicate. This relationship is healthy for Willy because he has a good role model. It is also healthy for his grandfather because seeing Willy makes him happy, regardless of his condition.

Score Point 3

11

the relationship Little willy has with his grandfather is a strong understanding of eachother. when the grandfather flipped his palm upward and willy knew it meant "yes," it showed how willy seems to understand his grandfather through a bond that the two of them have. when willy wanted to learn more signs so he could talk to his grandfather, it showed how much willy loves him and how he wants to communicate with his mute grandfather. Even though it is probably hard for the grandfather to live without talking, he somehow is connecting with his grandson anyway.

Score Point 2

11 Willy and his grandfather have a very caring relationship. They are both willing to try to communicate without words, which shows determination. An example of this determination is shown when Willy and his grandfather are making different hand signals.

Score Point 1

11 they have a very good loving relashonship thingy they talked and stuff like that so yeah that is it

Score Point 0

11

Student responses to this item included only a minimal number of zeros; an appropriate sample response could not be located.

Can I Talk to You?
Expressive Writing

(The passage for this prompt is located in Released Items 2008—Grade 8 Writing.)

7.5.2 Students demonstrate use of narrative strategies by using dialogue to advance plot/story line

⓬ Continue this story, using dialogue to develop the plot/story line.

Scoring Guide:

Score	Description
4	Response includes dialogue that clearly continues the plot/story line of the passage.
3	Response includes dialogue that generally continues the plot/story line of the passage. There may be minor lapses in focus.
2	Response is an attempt at dialogue that continues the plot/story line, although there may be major lapses.
1	Response may be unclear and/or a minimal attempt at a response to the prompt.
0	Response is totally irrelevant.
Blank	No response

Score Point 4

12

"I guess," she replied, taking a sip from a large 7-11 soda. Then I realized I had nothing to talk about, so I kind of shuffled around in the snow. She continued staring at me blankly, and then walked over to the garbage can + threw her soda away. I decided to start gossipping before she left.

"How about Anna's pants yesterday? Oh my gosh they were so ugly!" She stared at me more, except now with fury in her eyes.

"Jessica, you are such a jerk! I had the same pants in the 6th grade," she shouted.

"In 6th grade," I replied, upset.

"It's still really mean," she grumbled, turning away. I didn't know what to say.

"Fine," I finally stated + hustled away.

"FINE," she shouted behind me. All I could do was stomp home, confused and angry.

Score Point 3

12

She Said "What" look I know your mad that Jimmy likes me more than you, but can we Stop fighting and become good friends again? She just kept looking at me, and couldn't Stop Starring at me and she walked away, So I go back up to her and say "why are you so mad, it's not my fault that Jimmy likes me than he does you, I just like him as a friend, but he seems to like me more, So you should be mad at him and not me. She finaly talked she Said, I'm sorry its not your fault can we Still be friend." I Said sure, So know we are reall good friends, and jimmy moved away to California, and she got a better boyfriend that doesn't like me, like that it you know what I mean.

Score Point 2

⓬

"Yeah, sure" responded Betsy.
"Why did you tell Jorge I liked him? I really dislike him!"
"Yeah, well, you told Jimmy I liked him!" said Betsy.
"I thought you did. I'm sorry." I said.
"Please don't do it again, and I won't do it again." Said Betsy.
"Okay, I promise."

Score Point 1

⓬

Then shee said "no" Every time I ask her, she says "no" and then "forget about it"

Score Point 0

⓬

Student responses to this item included only a minimal number of zeros; an appropriate sample response could not be located.

Lightning
Informational Writing (Report)

(The fact sheet for this prompt is located in Released Items 2008—Grade 8 Writing.)

7.6.2 In informational writing, students organize ideas/concepts by selecting appropriate information to set context, which may include a lead/hook

13 Use the fact sheet to write an **introductory paragraph** for a report about the dangers of lightning. Your paragraph should

- contain a lead sentence/hook that will interest the reader in the report,
- set the context for the report, and
- include a clear focus/controlling idea.

Select only the facts you need for your **introduction**.

Scoring Guide:

Score	Description
4	Response provides an introduction to a report about the dangers of lightning. The paragraph contains an appropriate and effective lead sentence, clearly sets the context for the report, and contains a clearly stated focus/controlling idea. The paragraph includes only relevant facts from the fact sheet. The response is well-organized. The response includes a variety of correct sentence structures and demonstrates sustained control of grade-appropriate grammar, usage, and mechanics.
3	Response provides an introduction to a report about the dangers of lightning. There is a lead sentence, although it may serve more to introduce the topic than to capture the reader's interest. The paragraph sets the context and contains a focus/controlling idea, but there may be minor lapses in focus or clarity. The paragraph includes mostly relevant facts from the fact sheet. The response is generally well-organized. The response includes some sentence variety and demonstrates general control of grade-appropriate grammar, usage, and mechanics.
2	Response is an attempt at a paragraph that is an introduction to a report on the dangers of lightning. The paragraph may have no lead sentence, may not clearly set the context, or may lack a consistent focus or clear organization. The paragraph includes some relevant facts from the fact sheet. The response includes some attempt at sentence variety and may demonstrate inconsistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.
1	Response is undeveloped or contains an unclear focus. There is little evidence of logical organization.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response

Score Point 4

⓭

It moves 60,000 miles per second, it kills or injures several hundred people in America each year, and it is hotter than the sun. I'm not talking about some new animal or machine, I'm talking about lightning. There are about 100,000 thunderstorms in the U.S. each year, and the lightning from it causes more than 10,000 forest fires a year. Each bolt of lightning can light a lightbulb for three months, that's how powerful it is. If lightning can do that, imagine what else it can do.

Score Point 3

13

Lightning can't strike the same spot twice, right? Wrong! This powerful natural force moves at 60,000 miles per second and hurts or kills several hundred Americans each year. Although the chances that you will be hit are slim (1 in 600,000), it could still happen and every person should know a little bit of information about lightning in case it somehow affects your life someday.

Score Point 2

13

Although the chances of being hit are one in 600,000, this event kills or injures several hundred people in the United States each year. It strikes up to 100 times a second world wide. What is this mysterious event? It is blitz, german for lightning. What causes this exciting phenomena? What is the extent of it's damage? How powerful are they?

Score Point 1

13

Lighthing Its Danger is it can kill you with one hit. It turns sand in to glass its really cool please donet try that at home.

Score Point 0

⓭

Student responses to this item included only a minimal number of zeros; an appropriate sample response could not be located.

Informational Writing (Persuasive Writing)

(There is no passage that accompanies this prompt.)

Do you think that making your school lunch period longer is a good idea? Write to your principal to persuade him or her to agree with your point of view.

14 What is the focus/opinion of your writing?

Scoring Guide:

Score	Description
1	Response contains an appropriate focus/position related to the prompt. The focus/position may or may not be developed in the response to the prompt.
0	Response is totally irrelevant.
Blank	No response

15 What are the reasons/arguments in your writing?

Scoring Guide:

Score	Description
1	Response contains relevant reasons/arguments related to the position taken. These supporting reasons/arguments may or may not appear in the response to the prompt, as long as they are a logical extension of the position presented.
0	Response is totally irrelevant.
Blank	No response

Informational Writing (Persuasive Writing)

16 What is the conclusion to your writing?

Scoring Guide:

Score	Description
1	Response contains an appropriate conclusion related to the prompt. The conclusion may or may not be used in the response to the prompt.
0	Response is totally irrelevant.
Blank	No response

7.7.2 In informational writing, students effectively convey purpose by stating and maintaining a focus/controlling idea

17 Do you think that making your school lunch period longer is a good idea? Write to your principal to persuade him or her to agree with your point of view.

Scoring Guide:

Score	Description
6	• purpose/position is clear throughout; strong focus/position OR strongly stated purpose/opinion focuses the writing • intentionally organized for effect • fully developed arguments and reasons; rich, insightful elaboration supports purpose/opinion • distinctive voice, tone, and style effectively support position • consistent application of the rules of grade-level grammar, usage, and mechanics
5	• purpose/position is clear; stated focus/opinion is maintained consistently throughout • well organized and coherent throughout • arguments/reasons are relevant and support purpose/opinion; arguments/reasons are sufficiently elaborated • strong command of sentence structure; uses language to support position • consistent application of the rules of grade-level grammar, usage, and mechanics
4	• purpose/position and focus are evident but may not be maintained • generally well organized and coherent • arguments are appropriate and mostly support purpose/opinion • well-constructed sentences; uses language well • may contain some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics
3	• purpose/position may be general • some sense of organization; may have lapses in coherence • some relevant details support purpose; arguments are thinly developed • generally correct sentence structure; uses language adequately • may contain some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics
2	• attempted or vague purpose/position • attempted organization; lapses in coherence • generalized, listed, or undeveloped details/reasons • may lack sentence control or may use language poorly • may have errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that interfere with meaning
1	• minimal evidence of purpose/position • little or no organization • random or minimal details • rudimentary or deficient use of language • may have errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that interfere with meaning
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 6

Score Point 1

⓮ I think that we should have longer lunch periods.

Score Point 1

⓯ I think we should have longer lunch periods because we need to be able to eat and not be rushed. Rushing causes stress, so doesn't school. We need a time where we can eat and socialize and not have to be worried about being late for class.

Score Point 1

⓰ Lunch period Should be lengthened approximately 10 minutes longer to allow time to eat and relax.

Score Point 6

⓱ Dear Principal,

I am writing to you regarding our lunch period here at our school. I strongly feel that we should have longer lunch periods. I've noticed that other students and myself are rushing to finish our lunch. Rushing causes stress and adds up along with the stress we already have from school work, sports, families, and friends. Lunch should be a time when you can sit down, relax, and enjoy your meal. Students need a break during the day

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 6

where they can sit down with their friends and talk about what they did that day in class or about the big game at 5:30 that night. Also, during lunch time, most teachers try to get some of their work done as well. I've witnessed coming back into class (after pretty much running upstairs) teachers who haven't even sat down to eat their lunch because they were so busy trying to get everything else done. If lunch periods were longer, I think the student-body as well as teachers would really benefit from it. I also think if lunch was longer that the school would benefit from it too. Kids may decide that they want to buy a drink, hot lunch or even an ice-cream for desert. With our lunch period now, the only way to have a desert is to skip your main meal. This isn't a healthy way to eat.

I think to help this, lunches should be lengthend by approximately 10 minutes to give students and teachers alike the time they need to sit down, eat a good, healthy meal, socialize,

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 6

and relax. I hope that you will take
my opinions and thoughts into consideration.
Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,

- Writing is organized and coherent.
- Writing shows consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 5

Score Point 1

14 I think we need to extend our lunch period longer.

Score Point 1

15 Sometimes we don't even get enough time to eat. We also never get socializing time so lunch is the only way we can hangout and talk. Some kids are slow eaters, so sometimes they don't even get to finish their lunches.

Score Point 1

16 Since all of our recesses got taken away, I think it would be awesome if lunch was longer.

Score Point 5

17 I think making lunch longer would be a great idea! Being cramped up in class rooms all the time, and getting in trouble if you talk one little word is hard. We never really see our friends in the other class.

The reasons we should extend the lunch period are, for one it's the only time we get to eat. There isn't even enough time to eat our whole lunch even without talking. Basically that's the only time we

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 5

really get to talk to eachother. Secondly we don't have enough time to enjoy our food, we just wolf it down so we can eat it in time. For another reason it would give the teachers a break. They wouldn't need to worry about golfing down their food just to get back to the classroom in time.

Food is brain energy to. If some kids skip breakfast in the morning because they are running late then they will be extra hungry. Food also gives us energy to pay attention in class. Interacting with people also builds your confidence so really we do learn in lunch. It sure would be nice to have a longer time to eat and chat with your friends! If the period was longer we wouldn't have to throw it down and then have a feeling of sickness. Since that always happens to me if I eat to fast!

Please think about extending the period! Please!

- Writing has a clear purpose and focus with control of ideas throughout.
- Writing has precise word choice and a variety of sentence structures.

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 4

SCORE POINT 1

14 I do not think increasing the lunch period would be a good idea.

SCORE POINT 1

15 A longer period would cut into classes, the lunch period is long enough, lunch is for eating, not socializing.

SCORE POINT 1

16 A longer lunch period would not be a good idea.

SCORE POINT 4

17 I do not think increasing the lunch period is a wise idea. Our current lunch period serves its purpose; it allows us time for lunch and a brief break between our classes. There is enough time to both buy lunch and eat it, with time to spare. Any more time would cause it to be a socializing period. While it is a good thing to have friends, we are at school to learn, not gossip and giggle and all that other stuff people do. Also, all the talkative people will focus on

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 4

their conversations later when they
Should be focusing on schod work.
Finally, a longer lunch period would
cut into classes, causing less learning
time, which in turn causes teachers
to assign more homework. I,
personally, would rather have more
time at home than an extra time
to socialize. So, as you can see,
a longer lunch would be a bad
idea.

- Writing shows consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- Writing has a general purpose with attempted focus.

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 3

Score Point 1

⓮

I think there should be a longer lunch period.

Score Point 1

⓯

There should be a longer lunch period because the amount of people in our grade. If after your class before lunch you need to put something away ->

Score Point 1

⓰

In conclusion you want us to get to know people and lunch is where we do it

Score Point 3

⓱

I think there should be a longer lunch period. I think this because we have like 200 kids in each grade. Half of our lunch period is kids in the lunch line. We should have to sit down and hear the teacher tell us to hurry because theres five more minutes

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 3

just because you were put
at the end of the lunch
line because you needed
to go to our locker.
Another reason I think
this was we are in
School for like 8 hours.
15 minutes of that time
were with our friends.
Don't you think thats a
little crazy. Isn't half of
School about learning
social skills? We need lunch
for that
In Conclusion we don't
have time to get to know
people, lunch is when to do it

- Writing has a general purpose with attempted focus.
- Writing has some organization.

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 2

Score Point 1

14

To Persuade him/her to agree with me.

Score Point 1

15

to have a longer lunch period So we can have more time to Socalies with People. and more time to eat.

Score Point 1

16

these are reasons why we should have a longer lunch.

Score Point 2

17

I think we should have a longer lunch because we need time to talk to frends. So that we don't do it in class. Some of us don't have time to finish are lunch. before the bell rings and we have to go to Class. I know we don't come here to talk to fenids but it boring Just having Classes and

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 2

not being able to talk
mybe thats why icids
don't lisen to the teachers

- Writing has some supporting details.
- Writing shows minimal control of grammar, usage, and/or mechanics, which may interfere with understanding.

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 1

Score Point 1

14

I think making our lunches longer is a bad Idea because the day would be longer with a longer lunch.

Score Point 1

15

I think it is a bad Idea because say we have 4 lunches and lunches are 1 hr 30 min long that means with all lunches add up that is 6 hours of just lunch.

Score Point 1

16

No I think our lunches are long enough to finish your meal and to talk to.

Student Writing Sample—Score Point 1

Score Point 1

17

Dear Mr.

I think our lunches are just perfect for time because you can eat your meal and also have time to talk to your friends also I think that if you make them longer the school day will also be longer. That is my opinion on if our lunches should be longer.

- Writing has minimal or random details.
- Writing has limited word choice and/or control of sentence structure.

Score Point 0

⓱

Student responses to this item included only a minimal number of zeros; an appropriate sample response could not be located.