

STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMIC READINESS (STAAR™)

English I, II, and III Reading and Writing

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STAAR Test Design

English I, II, and III

2

- **Increased focus on application of skills in the context of actual performance tasks**
 - **52% of writing test based on essay performance**
 - **32% of reading test based on short answer performance**
- **Increased focus on critical and conceptual thinking**
- **Increased focus on using text evidence from different genres and text types (prose and non-prose)**
- **Increased focus on making connections between reading and writing**

STAAR Short Answer Questions Idea

3

All students must understand what constitutes a credible idea in response to a question.

- **An idea represents the quality and depth of thinking and understanding**
- **Idea for a score of 3: perceptive, coherent, discerning, clearly analytical**
- **Idea for a score of 2: reasonable and specific; goes beyond literal reading**

STAAR Short Answer Questions Idea

4

- **Idea for a score of 1: lacks explanation or specificity; represents only a literal reading of the text**
- **Idea for a score of 0: doesn't answer the question; incorrect or invalid reading of the text; too general, vague, or unclear to judge whether it is reasonable**

STAAR Short Answer Questions

Text Evidence

All students must be able to use text evidence to prove that their ideas are valid/credible.

- **Text evidence substantiates the reader's ideas; it reflects the degree to which the reader can connect his or her own ideas with the pieces of the text that best support the analysis.**

STAAR Short Answer Questions

Text Evidence

6

- **Text evidence for a score of 3: specific and well chosen**
- **Text evidence for a score of 2: accurate and relevant**
- **Text evidence for a score of 1: only a general reference, too partial, weakly linked, or wrongly manipulates the meaning of the text**
- **Text evidence for a score of 0: not evident or not attached to an idea**

New Prompt Page Design



WRITTEN COMPOSITION #1: Expository

Read the information in the box below.

In 1955 medical researcher Jonas Salk introduced an effective polio vaccine. At the time polio was considered the biggest threat to public health, yet Salk refused to profit by patenting the vaccine because he was more concerned with preventing disease than with personal gain.

Although many people work to benefit themselves, some people choose to put others first. Think carefully about this statement.

Write an essay explaining whether people should be more concerned about others than about themselves.

STAAR Writing Performance Labels Based on the Rubric

- **Score Point 1—VERY LIMITED**
- **Score Point 2—BASIC**
- **Score Point 3—SATISFACTORY**
- **Score Point 4—ACCOMPLISHED**

The goal: moving *all* students from the lower half of the score-scale range to the upper half of the range

March 2012 STAAR Writing English I Statewide Distributions

10

Literary Summed Scores		Expository Summed Scores	
1/1 = 2	5%	1/1 = 2	11%
1/2 = 3	6%	1/2 = 3	13%
2/2 = 4	23%	2/2 = 4	28%
2/3 = 5	22%	2/3 = 5	20%
3/3 = 6	28%	3/3 = 6	17%
3/4 = 7	10%	3/4 = 7	6%
4/4 = 8	6%	4/4 = 8	3%

December 2012 STAAR Writing English I Statewide Distributions

11

Literary Summed Scores		Expository Summed Scores	
1/1 = 2	7%	1/1 = 2	30%
1/2 = 3	9%	1/2 = 3	22%
2/2 = 4	37%	2/2 = 4	33%
2/3 = 5	24%	2/3 = 5	9%
3/3 = 6	17%	3/3 = 6	3%
3/4 = 7	4%	3/4 = 7	1%
4/4 = 8	1%	4/4 = 8	0%

What Happened in English I Writing

12

Spring 2012 Results (334,947 students)

- Level I: 45%
- Level II: 52%
- Level III: 3%

Summer 2012 Results (79,002 students)

- Level I: 76%
- Level II: 24%
- Level III: 0%

What Happened in English I Reading

13

Spring 2012 Results (334,825 students)

- Level I: 32%
- Level II: 60%
- Level III: 8%

Summer 2012 Results (53,765 students)

- Level I: 62%
- Level II: 38%
- Level III: 0%

Observations about Use of Space

14

- **Ineffective use of space**
 - **Introductions that repeat prompt, incorporate an unnecessary framing device, or include preview statements (average 5–9 lines)**
 - **Conclusions that simply repeat introduction**
 - **Use of “filler”**
 - **Sentences that don’t improve the quality of the idea**
 - **Unnecessary, inappropriate, or disruptive rhetorical questions or questions that directly address the reader**

Reminders—Literary Writing

15

- **Literary piece must be a story, but students have latitude in choosing how to respond to the prompt**
 - **can be based on real or imagined people, events, or ideas**
 - **can be written in a variety of ways: as a story based on a real or true-life experience, as fiction, as fantasy, or as science fiction**
 - **must have some type of story line and move through time (even if that story line captures only a small piece of time)**

Reminders—Literary Writing

16

- **Story should be narrowly focused—story line has to be manageable from a one-page perspective.**
- **Story should not include details or events that do not further the reader's understanding. Extraneous details and events always weaken the story line.**
- **Story can be written from any point of view: 1st person, 2nd person, or 3rd person.**

Reminders—Literary Writing

17

- **Judicious use of literary strategies and devices is important. Two examples:**
 - **Description can be effective, but too much description may cause disruptions in the story line.**
 - **Dialogue can be effective, especially in developing the characters or conflict, but dialogue (because of its “back and forth” nature) takes up space, and too much may preclude the student from developing the story within the 26-line limit.**

Reminders—Expository Writing

18

- **The essay must be responsive to both the purpose and the topic. Responsiveness can be weakened by**
 - **the use of an inappropriate or marginally appropriate organizing structure**
 - **inclusion of ideas that are extraneous or only marginally related to the topic**
- **An outside audience is implicit in the prompt, but students should remember that in expository writing, they are NOT trying to convince the reader to think a certain way or to accept a single viewpoint as valid.**

Reminders—Expository Writing

19

- **An explicit, specific thesis is critical to an effective expository essay. The earlier in the paper, the better. A weak or an evolving thesis leads to problems with focus, coherence, and development.**
- **Pronoun use—1st or 3rd person (or even 2nd person) can work as long as students are clearly explaining what they think about something.**
- **Pronoun shifts are sometimes necessary, though many students are shifting randomly throughout the essay.**

Reminders—Expository Writing

20

- **I believe that we can't care about others unless we care about ourselves first.**
- **I believe that people can't care about others unless they care about themselves first.**
- **I believe that you can't care about others unless you care about yourself first.**

Reminders—Expository Writing

21

- **Development is often weak because students attempt to base their essay on ideas that are too complicated or abstract for their writing skills.**
- **Ideas/development can be based on students' own lives/experiences and on their knowledge of the world and modern culture, which includes what they've read, seen, and discovered through books, movies, television, news, and history...BUT**
- **Development is most effective when it is based on what students TRULY know and understand.**

Reminders—Expository Writing

22

- **Lack of transitions or reliance on perfunctory transitions (e.g., First, Second, Third; My first reason, My next reason) negatively affects development.**
- **Clusters of ideas are linked to the prompt but not to each other—important in all cases but especially if ideas are different “grain sizes.”**
- **A roadblock to substance/depth/ thoughtfulness because writer does not “build” from one idea to the next.**

Reminders—Persuasive Writing

23

- **STAAR persuasive prompts focus on issues that are relevant to teenagers but that don't require them to bring particular background knowledge or facts to the table in order to write a good essay.**
- **The writer's purpose is to convince the reader to accept the writer's viewpoint or to take a particular action.**
- **Students can write in 1st or 3rd person as long as they establish and sustain a persuasive tone.**

Reminders—Persuasive Writing

24

- **The essay must be centered around a clear position, which represents the writer’s viewpoint on the issue and forms the basis of the argument.**
- **Students are not required to address the other side or make concessions or counterarguments.**
- **It is not so much the breadth of the argument as its depth that makes it convincing. Students have to think about the limitations of space when they’re planning how to approach the issue.**

Reminders—Persuasive Writing

25

- **Students must support their position with specific examples to make it convincing and forceful. Ideas should be ordered to maximize their persuasiveness—for example, building the argument so that the strongest evidence is at the end.**
- **Students can use ethos, pathos, logos or a combination—but they have to rely on what they really know and understand.**

That means NO false evidence!

Reminders—Analytical Writing

26

- **The analytical writing task is an interpretive essay about one aspect of a literary or informational text.**
- **The analytical essay requires students to demonstrate the skills required in expository and persuasive writing as well as those required on short answer reading questions.**
- **The writer's thesis statement must be a reasonable (though contestable) assertion about one aspect of a text that can be supported with textual evidence.**

Reminders—Analytical Writing

27

- **Ineffective approaches confuse**
 - **analysis and summary**
 - **general text references and specific text evidence**
- **Students must integrate their analysis and their text evidence so that their essay is coherent. (This will also help their short answer reading responses!)**
- **Analytical essays are scored on the quality of the interpretation, the strength of the text evidence, and the overall effectiveness of the essay.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

28

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