Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP)

ISASP Writing Test Overview

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Writing Prompts

The ISASP Writing Assessment consists of evidence-based writing prompts; the assessment includes opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing tasks.

Each writing prompt consists of a writing assignment, texts that supply information related to the writing topic, and a writing checklist to remind students of important components in a piece of writing. Writing assignments are based in writing scenarios that mimic authentic writing situations that might occur in a writer's world—at school, at work, or in the community. A specific audience is identified in each assignment so that students have sufficient information to address their writing to that audience and thus make their writing as effective as possible. Students are required to use ideas and/or information from one or more of the provided texts in their essays. Students are not required to use more than one provided text, though they can easily do so because the texts offer rich opportunity for interaction.

The accompanying texts provided in each writing prompt are original and designed to be appropriate for each grade level. Texts provided can take one of several forms; they might be text-based multi-paragraph passages, text- or data-based infographics, or visual drawings or photographs. Many writing tasks have more than one text. Total reading complexity for each prompt is equivalent to others at that grade level.

A focus on students' ability to produce effective opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing that substantively incorporates or references material from other texts is consistent with the Iowa Core. Evidence-based tasks that provide source materials offer many benefits from a timed assessment perspective. Primarily, it allows assessment of writing standards that require students to include source materials in their writing. Additionally, however, it reinforces the overall importance of evidence, support, and/or illustration when writing. It also provides perspectives on the topic—perspectives that students ordinarily are exposed to through research or classroom discussions for school writing assignments—that students can incorporate as support, analyze for weakness, or react to when developing their discussions. The provided materials model domain specific language for the topic as well, so students can demonstrate their ability to incorporate relevant vocabulary within their responses. Lastly, providing texts to students as part of the writing task ensures that all students have the opportunity to successfully complete the task without any prior knowledge of the subject matter.

Effort is made to develop prompts with subject matter that will be interesting and engaging to the student audience at all levels. Potentially sensitive, upsetting, or controversial topics are avoided. Care is taken to keep topics and passage content fair and unbiased from socioeconomic, sociocultural, racial, ethnic, geographic, and gender perspectives.

Rubrics

Student responses to writing prompts are scored using analytic rubrics. The rubrics are designed specifically for each writing mode (opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative) at each grade level. Responses are given scores in each of four scoring traits. These traits include: Prompt Task, Development of *Mode* (where *Mode* is replaced by Opinion, Argument, Explanation, or Narrative based on the prompt), Organization, and Language Use. The score for Prompt Task considers use of evidence from provided texts as well as how clearly the response focuses on the writing task given in the prompt. The score for Development assesses development of ideas and support in the writing. The Organization score reflects how well ideas are organized within the response. The Language Use score is based on word choice, sentence construction, and style; tone is also assessed when appropriate at upper levels. Scores between one and five are assigned for each trait, with five as the highest score. Descriptions for three of the five score points (3, 4 and 5) for the grade 4 rubric for the Information/Explanatory writing prompt are provided below.   Additional sample rubrics for each grade and mode of writing can be found at: http://iowa.pearsonaccessnext.com/rubrics/.

Grade 4 Informative/Explanatory Rubric

	Prompt Task	Development of Explanation	Organization	Language Use
5	Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are clear from the start. Successfully uses ample relevant evidence from provided texts to support the explanation.	Explains topic(s) completely. Effectively uses ample specific and relevant facts, definitions, details, examples, and/or other appropriate information in the explanation.	Has a clear, well-developed introduction. Provides a logical concluding statement or section. Organizes ideas effectively, clearly grouping related ideas together throughout the response. Consistently uses varied linking words and phrases to connect ideas.	Uses precise and varied word choice. Employs topic-specific vocabulary successfully. Uses well-controlled sentences that are varied in length and complexity.
4	Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are clear. Appropriately uses some evidence from provided texts to support the explanation.	Explains topic(s) adequately. Explanation includes some specific and relevant facts, definitions, details, examples, and/or other appropriate information.	Has a clear, somewhat developed introduction. Provides a clear concluding statement or section. Organizes ideas adequately, grouping related ideas together throughout the response. Consistently uses simple and/or repetitive linking words and phrases to connect ideas.	Uses mostly specific and somewhat varied word choice. Occasionally employs topic-specific vocabulary successfully. Demonstrates adequate control of sentences with some variety in length and structure.
3	Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are apparent within the response as a whole. Evidence from provided texts is used but is limited, overused, or misrepresented.	Explains topic(s) to a limited extent or the explanation is developed unevenly. Explanation includes few or only general facts, details, and examples. Some information may be repetitive or may not be clearly relevant.	Provides a basic introduction and basic concluding statement or section. Generally groups related ideas together, though parts of the response may be out of place. Sometimes uses linking words and phrases to connect ideas.	Uses general word choice. Attempts to employ topic-specific vocabulary may be unsuccessful. Demonstrates a little variety in sentence structure, although there may be a few long, uncontrolled sentences.

Scoring

To prepare for scoring, range finding is first performed on field tested responses to a prompt. Iowa teachers are convened to help identify model papers for each of the five score points in each trait. From those model papers, Anchor Sets and Practice Sets are created to train scorers. After training, all scorers must pass a rigorous qualifying test in order to score responses for a prompt. Throughout field test scoring, Calibration papers are used to ensure scorers maintain consistency. In addition, Validity papers are sent through the scoring system to ensure accuracy; scorers who do not accurately score Validity papers are removed from scoring.

Scoring during an operational assessment is primarily performed by an automated Intelligent Essay Assessor (IEA). The IEA is prepared for scoring by being trained with thousands of human-scored responses from a field test. During operational scoring, ten percent of all responses scored by the IEA are also validated by humans; the human scores for these papers are compared to IEA scores to ensure IEA scores are accurate.

Contributions to the Language/Writing Test Score

The ISASP Writing Assessment is one component of the more extensive ISASP Language/Writing Test. The Language/Writing Test uses both multiple-choice items and the evidence-based direct writing assessment to measure Iowa Core Standards in Language and Writing. Results provide domain-level information for each student, as well as contribute to one Language/Writing scale score.

The two sections of the Language/Writing Test assess Iowa Core Language and Writing Standards domains as follows:

Domains	Contributing Scores	
	Language Section	Writing Section
Conventions of Standard English/Knowledge of Language	X	X
Vocabulary Acquisition and Usage	X	
Text Types and Purposes	X	X
Production and Distribution of Writing		X
Research to Build and Present Knowledge		X

The ISASP Language/Writing Assessment score is combined with the ISASP Reading Assessment score to create the English Language Arts scale score.