FLORIDA
Writes!

Writing
10

10
My Writing

10
WRITING

10

Writing

WRITING
10

10

writing

GRADE
10

Florida Writes!
Report on the
2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment

Grade 10

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

FCAT

Table of Contents

Preface

To improve statewide assessment in Florida and to test students' writing achievement, the 1990 Florida Legislature mandated the assessment of students' writing in Grades 4, 8, and 10. The Florida Writing Assessment Program was established in response to this legislative action.

The development of this assessment began in 1990. The Assessment and School Performance section of the Department of Education (DOE) reviewed the latest advances in writing assessment and conferred with writing and curriculum consultants from Florida and from other states with established writing assessment programs. The DOE, with the assistance of advisory groups of teachers, school and district administrators, and citizens, developed the writing prompts (topics) and the scoring rubric (description of writing at each score point) and selected student responses to represent each score point.

For this assessment, each student is given a prompt and has 45 minutes to read the prompt independently, plan the response, and write the draft. A separate sheet is provided for planning and prewriting activities (e.g., outlining, clustering, mapping, and jotting down ideas). Within each classroom, students are randomly assigned one of two prompts. Fourth grade students respond to a prompt asking them to explain (expository writing) or tell a story (narrative writing); eighth and tenth grade students respond to a prompt asking them to explain (expository writing) or persuade (persuasive writing). Students are not allowed to use a dictionary or other writing resources during the assessment. (See Appendix B for examples of the assessment directions, answer book, and planning sheet.)

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10 is designed for educators who are involved in developing, implementing, or evaluating curriculum in high schools. This publication describes the content and application of the Grade 10 writing performance task and offers suggestions for activities that may be helpful in preparing students for the assessment.

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 4 and *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8* provide information about the writing prompts administered to fourth and eighth grade students in 2006. *Florida Solves! Report on the 2006 FCAT Mathematics Released Items, Florida Reads! Report on the 2006 FCAT Reading Released Items,* and *Florida Inquires! Report on the 2006 FCAT Science Released Items* provide information about the mathematics, reading, and science performance tasks featured on the FCAT 2006 student reports. Additional information about FCAT reports can be found in *Understanding FCAT Reports 2006* on the Florida Department of Education web site at http://www.fldoe.org. (See Appendix G for further information on FCAT Publications and Products.)

If you have questions, please ask your school or district coordinator of assessment for assistance. The Office of Assessment and School Performance is also available to respond to questions concerning the writing assessment and this publication.

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test: FCAT Writing+

Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability

Florida's writing assessment was designed to assess Standard 2 of Goal 3 from *Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability*: "Record information in writing; compose and create communications; accurately use language, graphic representations, styles, organizations, and formats appropriate to the language, information, concept, or idea and the subject matter, purpose, and audience; and include supporting documentation and detail." These competencies are integral to all aspects of writing instruction and, with the Sunshine State Standards, describe the writing skills expected of students.

Florida's Writing Assessment

The DOE has supplemented the FCAT Writing+ performance task with multiple-choice items. The first round of multiple-choice items was field tested last year as part of the February 2005 administration of FCAT Writing+ (performance task plus multiple-choice items). With the addition of the multiple-choice component, the writing assessment was renamed "FCAT Writing+." Scores for FCAT Writing+ were reported for the first time in May 2006.

FCAT Writing+ includes a performance-based assessment known as demand writing. Demand writing assessment involves assigned topics, timed writing, and scored responses. The demand writing approach is used by many teachers during classroom instruction, by some employers during the job interview process, and in large-scale assessments, such as the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP); the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT); the American College Testing Program (ACT); and the Florida College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST). The strength of a large-scale assessment is that all student papers can be judged against a common standard. The result is a source of statewide information that can be used to characterize writing performance on a consistent basis.

The FCAT Writing+ assessment has adopted demand writing as an efficient and effective method of assessing tenth graders. Students are expected to produce a focused, organized, well-supported draft in response to an assigned topic within a 45-minute time period.

Effective Writing

How can teachers affect dramatic improvements in their students' writing? First, teachers must recognize instructional practices that have not produced quality writing for the majority of Florida's students.

Teachers must recognize the limitations of presenting, and accepting as correct, one organizational plan over all others. While a formula may be useful for beginning or novice writers who need scaffolding in organizational techniques and in the crafting of elaboration, it should not be an outcome expectation for student writers at any grade level.

Additionally, rote memorization of an essay component, such as an introduction or lead paragraph, is a practice that lends itself to the production of dull or confusing content. Using another writer's work in an

FCAT Writing+ response may be considered a violation of test administration rules. An explicit requirement of FCAT Writing+ is that the work must be the student's original writing.

According to the FCAT Writing+ scoring rubric, the student should be engaged with the writing, and the response should reflect the student's insight into the writing situation and demonstrate a mature command of language. Modeling the sentence styles and techniques of excellent writers may help a student achieve the characteristics demonstrated in purposeful, high-quality writing.

A skillful writer incorporates elements of composition in such a way that a reader can experience the writer's intended meaning, understand the writer's premise, and accept or reject the writer's point of view. Effective writing exhibits such traits as:

- a clear focus on the topic;
- detailed presentation of relevant information;
- an organized structure, including a beginning, a middle, and an end;
- appropriate transitional devices that enable the reader to follow the flow of ideas;
- elaborated support that incorporates details, examples, vivid language, and mature word choice;
- demonstrated knowledge of conventions of standard written English in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage; and
- varied sentence structure.

The best way to teach writing is to engage students in a recursive writing process that includes planning, writing, revising, and editing. A curriculum that consistently emphasizes reading and the use of spoken and written language in all subject areas and at all grade levels affords students the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes, thereby enhancing a student's success in writing.

Design of FCAT Writing+

Descriptions of the Writing Prompts

Each student taking the FCAT Writing+ assessment is given a booklet in which the topic for writing, called a prompt, is printed. The prompt serves as a stimulus for writing by presenting the topic and by suggesting that the student think about some aspect of the topic's central theme. The prompt does not contain directives concerning the organizational structure or the development of support.

Prompts are designed to elicit writing for specific purposes. For instance, expository prompts ask students to explain why or how, while persuasive prompts require students to convince a person to accept a point of view or to take a particular action. Prompts have two basic components: the writing situation and the directions for writing. The writing situation orients students to the subject, and the directions for writing set the parameters, such as identifying the audience to whom the writing is directed.

The prompts for the FCAT Writing+ assessment are selected to ensure that the subject matter is appropriate for tenth grade students. In addition, prompts are reviewed for offensive or biased language relating to religion, gender, and racial or ethnic backgrounds. All prompts are reviewed by members of the Tenth Grade Writing Assessment Advisory Committee and are pilot tested on a small group of students, then field tested on 1,000 students statewide. The DOE annually writes, reviews, pilot tests, and field tests prompts for potential use. (See Appendix C for further information on the procedures used to write and review prompts.)

Example of an Expository Prompt

Below is an example of an expository prompt. The first component presents the topic: jobs or chores. The second component suggests that the student think about various jobs or chores, and write about the reasons he or she does a particular job or chore.

Writing Situation:

Most teenagers have chores.

Directions for Writing:

Think about why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Now write to explain why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Example of a Persuasive Prompt

In the prompt below, the first component (the topic) focuses on the effect watching television has on students' grades. The second component suggests that the student think about these effects, then persuade the principal to accept the student's point of view.

Writing Situation:

    The principal of your school has suggested that watching TV causes students' grades to drop.

Directions for Writing:

    Think about the effect watching TV has on your grades and your friends' grades.

    Now write to convince your principal whether watching TV causes students' grades to drop.

Scoring Method and Rubric

Holistic Scoring

The scoring method used to score the FCAT Writing+ essay is called holistic scoring. Trained scorers judge the total piece of writing in terms of pre-defined criteria. Holistic scoring assumes that the skills that make up the ability to write are closely interrelated and that one skill cannot be separated from the others. Scorers do not grade the response by enumerating its mechanical, grammatical, or linguistic weaknesses. To assign a score, scorers for FCAT Writing+ consider the integration of four writing elements: focus, organization, support, and conventions. This scoring method results in greater attention to the writer's message, staying closer to what is essential in realistic communication.

Focus refers to how clearly the paper presents and maintains a main idea, theme, or unifying point.
- Papers receiving low scores may contain information that is loosely related, extraneous, or both.
- Papers receiving high scores demonstrate a consistent awareness of the topic and avoid loosely related or extraneous information.

Organization refers to the structure or plan of development (beginning, middle, and end) and the relationship of one point to another. Organization refers to the use of transitional devices to signal both the relationship of the supporting ideas to the main idea, theme, or unifying point, and the connections between and among sentences.
- Papers receiving low scores may lack or misuse an organizational plan or transitional devices.
- Papers receiving high scores demonstrate an effective organizational plan.

Support refers to the quality of details used to explain, clarify, or define. The quality of the support depends on word choice, specificity, depth, relevance, and thoroughness.
- Papers receiving low scores may contain little, if any, development of support, such as a bare list of events or reasons, or support that is extended by a detail.
- Papers receiving high scores generally provide elaborated examples, and the relationship between the supporting ideas and the topic is clear.

Conventions refer to punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and sentence structure. These conventions are basic writing skills included in Florida's Sunshine State Standards.
- Papers receiving low scores often contain errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage, and may have little variation in sentence structure.
- Papers receiving high scores generally follow the basic conventions of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage, and various sentence structures are used.

Score Points in Rubric

The rubric provides a scoring description for each score point. The rubric used to score papers is shown below. Appendix E contains instructional implications for each score point.

6 Points   The writing is focused and purposeful, and it reflects insight into the writing situation. The organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. Effective use of transitional devices contributes to a sense of completeness. The development of the support is substantial, specific, relevant, and concrete. The writer shows commitment to and involvement with the subject and may use creative writing strategies. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language with freshness of expression. Sentence structure is varied, and few, if any, convention errors occur in mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

5 Points   The writing is focused on the topic, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. Effective use of transitional devices contributes to a sense of completeness. The support is developed through ample use of specific details and examples. The writing demonstrates a mature command of language, and there is variation in sentence structure. The response generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

4 Points   The writing is focused on the topic and includes few, if any, loosely related ideas. An organizational pattern is apparent, and it is strengthened by the use of transitional devices. The support is consistently developed, but it may lack specificity. Word choice is adequate, and variation in sentence structure is demonstrated. The response generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

3 Points   The writing is focused but may contain ideas that are loosely connected to the topic. An organizational pattern is demonstrated, but the response may lack a logical progression of ideas. Development of support may be uneven. Word choice is adequate, and some variation in sentence structure is demonstrated. The response generally follows the conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and spelling.

2 Points   The writing addresses the topic but may lose focus by including extraneous or loosely related ideas. The organizational pattern usually includes a beginning, middle, and ending, but these elements may be brief. The development of the support may be erratic and nonspecific, and ideas may be repeated. Word choice may be limited, predictable, or vague. Errors may occur in the basic conventions of sentence structure, mechanics, usage, and punctuation, but commonly used words are usually spelled correctly.

1 Point   The writing addresses the topic but may lose focus by including extraneous or loosely related ideas. The response may have an organizational pattern, but it may lack a sense of completeness or closure. There is little, if any, development of the supporting ideas, and the support may consist of generalizations or fragmentary lists. Limited or inappropriate word choice may obscure meaning. Frequent and blatant errors may occur in the basic conventions of sentence structure, mechanics, usage, and punctuation, and commonly used words may be misspelled.

Unscorable   The paper is unscorable because
- the response is not related to what the prompt requested the student to do;
- the response is simply a rewording of the prompt;
- the response is a copy of a published work;
- the student refused to write;
- the response is illegible;
- the response is written in a foreign language;
- the response is incomprehensible (words are arranged in such a way that no meaning is conveyed);
- the response contains an insufficient amount of writing addressing the prompt;
- the response contains an insufficient amount of writing to determine if the student was attempting to address the prompt; or
- the writing folder is blank.

Examples of unscorable student responses do not appear in this report.

Scoring of the Assessment

Student papers are scored following administration of the FCAT Writing+ assessment each February. Prior to each scoring session, members of the Writing Rangefinder Committee (comprised of Florida educators) read student responses and select papers to represent the established standards for each score point. The scoring contractor uses these papers to train the scorers to score FCAT Writing+ essays. A scoring guide (or anchor set) containing the rubric and example papers for each score point provides the basis for developing a common understanding of the standards recommended by the committee. A skilled scoring director and team leaders are responsible for training, assisting, and monitoring readers throughout the training and scoring process. All scoring is monitored by Florida Department of Education staff.

Scorers are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, preferably in education, English, or a related field, and must write an essay as part of the application process. To qualify as a scorer for FCAT Writing+, each candidate must also complete intensive training and demonstrate mastery of the scoring method by accurately assigning scores to the sample responses in a series of qualification sets. (See Appendix D for the bias issues discussed with the scorers.)

During scoring, scoring directors and team leaders verify the scores assigned to papers and answer questions about unusual or unscorable papers. Additional methods are used to ensure that all scorers are adhering to scoring standards. This includes having at least two scorers score each student response and having scorers score sets of papers pre-scored by the Writing Rangefinder Committee.

Suggestions for Preparing Students for the FCAT Writing+ Performance Task

The assessment of writing, by its nature, incorporates the assessment of higher-order thinking skills because students are required to generate and develop ideas that form the basis of their written responses. Instructional programs that emphasize higher-order thinking skills in all subjects and grade levels will have a positive influence on a student's writing proficiency.

A strong relationship exists between reading and effective writing. An active reader, one who analyzes passages and makes logical predictions before and during reading, uses the higher-order thinking skills associated with effective writing.

Improvement in writing can be made when students receive feedback or explanations about their writing. For example, if a student is not told that effective writing creates images in a reader's mind, then a student may continue to simply list rather than elaborate on reasons or arguments.

Recommendations for District and School Administrators

Administrators have the unique opportunity to directly influence the establishment and maintenance of writing programs. Administrators can provide leadership to writing instruction programs by

- ensuring that *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10* is available to all high school teachers;
- bringing teachers together to discuss how to use *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10*;
- maintaining a literacy program that sets high standards for writing across all subject areas and grade levels;
- bringing teachers together to discuss interdisciplinary approaches and articulation of writing instruction across (and within) all subject areas and grade levels;
- arranging educational and professional growth opportunities for teachers;
- modeling the importance of effective written communication;
- assisting teachers in developing school-level writing expectations and assessment programs, such as portfolio assessment or schoolwide assessment of writing samples;
- scheduling in-service writing instruction and holistic scoring workshops for teachers and parents;
- emphasizing that writing should not be used as punishment;
- providing a print-rich environment in every classroom;
- including reference materials on writing in the schools' professional libraries; and
- encouraging the use of the writing process: planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and celebrating student writing.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers' daily contact with students gives them many opportunities to directly influence student attitudes toward writing. Instruction in writing should regularly involve the full writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Displaying or publishing student writing acknowledges their successes.

Real-world writing often requires demand writing (writing a response to a topic in a short period of time). As a part of writing instruction, students should work independently to read a topic, plan for writing, and formulate a response within a specified time frame. Analysis of writing that includes constructive feedback for students is a necessary step to enable students to improve their writing skills.

Teachers can prepare students for the performance task through a number of teacher-generated activities that include asking students to

* write responses to questions as an alternative to selecting correct responses on a multiple-choice test;
* read passages and create summary questions;
* write their views on current events before or after the events have been discussed in class;
* critique written pieces (e.g., published works and student writings);
* read and analyze different types of writing (e.g., biographies, science fiction, fantasies, historical accounts, speeches, and news reports);
* write letters to explain views on a particular issue or to refute the views of another person;
* write stories about real or imagined events;
* write descriptions of how things look, smell, taste, sound, and feel;
* write endings for unfinished fictional and nonfictional stories;
* write personal anecdotes and incorporate them into writing that either explains or persuades;
* maintain subject-area writing portfolios or participate in a long-term writing project; and
* review student responses in *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10.*

Recommendations for Parents and Guardians

Parents' and guardians' daily contact with children provides them the unique opportunity to be involved with their children's education inside and outside the classroom. Parents and guardians can encourage their children to write by

* discussing what the children have read and written at home and at school;
* having children write letters to friends and relatives;
* writing notes to children with instructions for chores;
* speaking with teachers about children's writing development;
* promoting writing for a variety of purposes in their children's school curriculum;
* displaying stories, essays, or other written work at home on the refrigerator or a bulletin board; and
* demonstrating the value of writing in real-life situations (e.g., letters to the editor of the local newspaper; letters of inquiry, complaint, or application; and letters to family and friends).

Expository Responses from the 2006 Assessment

Definition of Expository Writing

The purpose of expository writing is to inform, clarify, explain, define, or instruct by giving information, explaining why or how, clarifying a process, or defining a concept. Well-written exposition has a clear, central focus developed through a carefully crafted presentation of facts, examples, or definitions that enhance the reader's understanding. These facts, examples, and definitions are objective and not dependent on emotion, although the writing may be lively, engaging, and reflective of the writer's underlying commitment to the topic.

Summary of the Expository Responses Written in 2006

The annotated papers in this section represent responses to a prompt that directed students to explain what changes they would make to a classroom to make it more comfortable. Students responding to this prompt generally chose to explain how to make a classroom more comfortable. A paper was scorable if the student selected something that would make a classroom more comfortable and provided an explanation for his or her choice. Papers that focused on the topic, displayed an organizational pattern, contained elaborated support, showed variety in sentence structure, and generally followed the conventions of writing were scored in the higher ranges of the scale.

Suggestions for Use of the Annotated Responses

Teachers may use the responses on the following pages to improve student writing skills and help students understand the scoring criteria. Each response in this publication is annotated to explain why it was assigned a particular score. Personal information has been removed or fictionalized to protect the identity of the writer. Teachers can delete the scores and annotations and make transparencies or copies of the responses. Additional instructional uses of the responses include the following:

- rank ordering the responses from highest to lowest scores;
- highlighting words and phrases that provide an organizational structure and develop the supporting ideas in a response;
- listing the strengths and weaknesses of a response;
- revising and editing a response based on either a student-generated list of the strengths and weaknesses or the annotation beneath the response (this activity might include improving the introduction and conclusion, adding transitional devices, providing more details and examples, refining word choice, and varying sentence structure); and
- using the rubric and skills above to score student responses to similar prompts.

I'm not exactly sure what classrooms were like 100 years ago, but I'm definitely not sure great advancements were made to them. Upon walking into a classroom, you see a teachers' desk, usually piled high in random papers, a computer which could have been the very first one invented, and about thirty to forty - 2 x 2½ ft desks. Did I mention the chairs are a dazzling blue plastic that creak when even the lightest person sits in them?

It's about time to bring a few things up-to-date. Why don't we start with those desks. Because classes can not be made smaller without disrupting a child's learning, why don't we give the desks a bit of a make over. All that's needed to to this is a handy foot extra so the pupil has room to spread his or her materials out a bit more. Then, they won't have a dictionary open in their lap while having another book open on the desk when trying to find the meaning of a word in the text the class is reading. Perhaps the extra room on the desk could also solve the problem of aisles laden with other books and materials.

The next renovation in mind is the charming blue chairs accompanying the desks. This task might take a bit longer than the desks. Students typically take classes for eight hours a day, sometimes more if they stay after for tutoring. Surely most proffessionals who work their 9-5 schedules have comfortable, or at least, padded

Go On ▶

chairs. School chairs don't need to be executive chairs you sink into when sitting in the, but a layer of padding would be appreciated. Perhaps the padding would also absorb the sounds the chair makes when first sitting in it. The squeaks are a nuisense when working.

The final upgrade suggestion is to bring the outdoors inside. This upgrade is even quite easy on the budget. Instead of seeing sparce white-washed walls when walking into a classroom, add a splash of color with one of our photosynthetic friends. Plants are a great way to 'liven up' and bring color to a room. By placing plants strategically around a room, you can create the feeling of being in an English garden, in the tropical rainforests of Brazil, or even out in the desert. The key is to offer variety in a natural way that might gain, or keep, a student's interest.

Hopefully, this three-step renovation helped give insight on how to make a classroom more comfortable. The producer of this work is aware that not every county may have the budget to up grade each learning facility, but based on strenuous experimentation, these renovations work best in making a student comfortable, and stimulating him/her in the classroom.

SCORE POINT 6

This response focuses on a three-step process for making a classroom more comfortable. The organizational plan, includes effective transitional devices and substantial support. The writer's plan includes enlarging the size of the desks, putting padding on the chairs, and adding color and greenery to the décor. Support for each reason is consistently elaborated through explanations and examples. The conclusion reflects insight into the writing situation: "The producer of this work is aware that not every county may have the budget to up grade each learning facility, but based on strenuous experimentation, these renovations work best in making a student comfortable, and stimulating him/her in the classroom." A mature command of language with freshness of expression is demonstrated. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide illustrative details for each reason. For example, the writer could have told about a particular situation when he or she had trouble spreading materials on a classroom desk and how the inadequate workspace affected the quality of the product. Occasional errors in basic conventions should be corrected.

Umph! Imagine yourself plopping down in your favorite chair and making that noise. When you can just lay your head back, listen to some nice easy music, and rejuvenate yourself. Now, lets imagine we were doing this in school! To make the classrooms much more comfortable, I would recommend that teachers tweek with the lighting, play soft background music, and change seating arrangements to suit students. So maybe you wouldn't have to hold that "umph!" in much longer.

I firmly believe that lighting can change a room into either a warm sanctuary or a harsh, uninviting climate. Many of our nation's youth suffer from eye problems, so even a glare off of the board can drive one to insanity. On the other end of the spectrum, however, if the lights are to dim it can make the perfect type of environment... to sleep in. If the administration could find a perfect medium between bright and dim, they could easily solve some of the minor learning problems. And helping them to learn not only make the students more comfortable, but the parents as well. This chain reaction of events could be put into motion if they simply tone the lighting down or kick it up.

Lighting isn't the only way to make students feel more at ease in the classroom. A nice musical arrangement can also enhance the classroom experience. Numerous studies

Go On ▶

EXPOSITORY STUDENT RESPONSE

have shown conclusively that music helps to stimulate the brain, especially classical music. Music can also help one to focus. Just like music enhances interest in a certain point in a movie, music can also peak interest in other fields, most of all education. When entering a room, the music playing can either compel you to stay a little while or get the escape car and flee the scene. With this same technique, classes can also become more inviting. Probably one of the most beneficial uses of music in the classroom is that it will drown out all of those distracting classroom noises, like somebody tapping their pencil or whispering. We can all do without that!

Would you rather sit in that nice recliner you've worn the footrest out on, or a cold, hard, metal desk? Plain old desks make it nearly impossible to write for left-handed people. Slumping down in a desk can cause equal discomfort. Desks offer a limited amount of space, so I would recommend tables instead of individual seats.

Hopefully, if these revisions are sought to in our school system, we will no longer come home weary and frustrated. When the administrations sees to the lighting, decides to add music, and changes seating, then I feel we can all let out our "umph"!

SCORE POINT

6

This response is focused, purposeful, and reflects insight into the writing situation. The organizational plan includes a creative introduction explaining why students won't have to "hold that 'umph!' in much longer," a middle section that elaborates on details, and a conclusion that reiterates the reasons for the writer's choices. This organizational plan and substantial support contribute to a sense of completeness. A mature command of language is shown: "Numerous studies have shown conclusively that music helps to stimulate the brain, especially classical music" The conclusion includes a reference to the beginning of the response: "When the administrations sees to the lighting, decides to add music, and changes seating, then I feel we can all let out our 'umph'!" Sentence structures vary, and few errors occur in conventions.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more detail about why sitting at tables is preferable to sitting in desks. Correcting occasional convention errors would also enhance this response.

"Finally only 10 minutes left of class. My back hurts from sitting here so long." Most students have that thought running through their heads when they are in a classroom. Everyone wants to escape those harsh flourescent lights, and hard plastic-and-wood desks. "Wouldn't it be great if this room was carpeted? Maybe even a sofa in the back wouldn't hurt." Is also a thought some students have. Though classrooms are set up in these uncomfortable ways, their sole purpose is to create an environment suitable for an enriching learning experience. This isn't working, though, because it has a somewhat opposite effect.

The lights above my head are irritatingly white. It's very annoying to have everything so white/light in a classroom. Though the goal is to keep students awake with the brightness, it makes a student want to sleep in order to get away from the light. I believe the perfect solution to this problem would be open windows, or a different color light. Either solution would be more soothing and help students relax.

Another problem with classrooms is the seats. They are very hard and most uncomfortable a size. Students spend half of their time squirming around in their seats concentrating on finding which position is most comfortable for them to stay in. I believe that by making seats adjustable and more comfortable it will prevent a loss of students' concentration.

One last problem is not having carpet. Most students do their homework on a carpet at home, or maybe even a sofa. Having some kind of different texture on the

Go On ▶

floor could help students. This would help while students are given free time to complete/start assigments after the lecture. If students could have carpet, & freedom to sit on it, then they would do their work quickly & with better quality. Agreed, the carpet might be alittle dirty, but a towel from home or quilt provided by the teacher would help.

So as you can see, there are many ways to improve the comfortability of a classroom, which directly affects the way students are educated. If the above suggestions were taken into serious consideration, you could see that the set up of a classroom is 50% of the reason for bad results of students. So next time you walk into a classroom, envision what is, and how much better it could be.

SCORE POINT 5

The response is focused, and its organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. The writer begins by giving reasons for changing the classroom environment, then explains how these changes would "create an environment suitable for an enriching learning experience," and concludes with a challenge to the reader: "So next time you walk into a classroom, envision what is, and how much better it could be." The logical organizational plan and ample support contribute to a sense of completeness. Each reason is consistently elaborated with some specific examples and illustrations. In the fourth paragraph, the writer examines the effect that carpeting on the floor would have on learning: "If students could have carpet, & freedom to sit on it, then they would do their work quickly & with better quality. Agreed, the carpet might be a little dirty, but a towel from home or quilt provided by the teacher would help." A mature command of language with freshness of expression is sometimes demonstrated. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: More fully elaborated and specific support could be provided. For example, the writer should clarify reasons and provide additional support for why changing the color of the lights and the shape of the seats would help students relax and "prevent a loss of students' concentration."

What would make a classroom more comfortable? What would make it so that people would actually be looking forward to going to class. Atmosphere is the key. There has to be pleasant vibes when you walk in a room. If teachers used a book on Feng shui while decorating, their students would want to hang out all the time. Culture is important, sofas and pillows would be fantastic, as well as music and food. The entire atmosphere, if good, would make a classroom more comfortable for both the student, and the teacher.

Slap a little paint on those walls, open up a window, and just let it flow! Even if you do not believe in the wonderful art of Feng shui, it really does work. If a room is alligned just right, with a few extra snazzy props, it can be like a temple. There should be scented candles, plants, flowers. Not to the extent of being in a jungle, but just as a few accents. Also, those little fountain type things with healing crystals, stones and running water, are always soothing to the soul.

Secondly, no student would object to having a sofa or two in their classroom. Personally, I like little small cushions that you can sit on. The room may look like it was meant for meditating 101, but that is the type of classroom environment I am looking for. A certain variety of culture is also important. By looking around schools, we notice a diverse crowd of many fascinating

Go On ▶

cultures and ethnic backrounds.

Along with setting a good atmosphere, I am a firm believer in the sense that music sets the mood. Relaxing music in the classroom is an idea all teachers should consider. Now I am not talking about Frank Sinatra music, though he is great, but more along the lines of something nature oriented or from different cultures. African, Celtic, basically a Pure moods soundtrack.

Here is the big one... food! Everyone loves food. There should be a snackbar in every classroom. Simple things like fruit, vegetables, cheese, crackers, and juice. Oh would we love our teachers forever. It is all about the brain food.

To sum up, the overall atmosphere of a classroom is key to what makes it comfortable. Feng shui, culture, cushions, music, and food are all very important in making classrooms more enjoyable. So what are we waiting for? Let us get started!

SCORE POINT 5

This response is clearly focused on changing the classroom "atmosphere," and the writer offers a justification for this particular choice: "The entire atmosphere, if good, would make a classroom more comfortable for both the student, and the teacher." An organizational plan is apparent, and effective transitional devices provide for a logical progression of ideas. The writing conveys a sense of completeness through its organizational plan and ample support. Support is consistently developed, and a mature command of language with freshness of expression is demonstrated: "Slap a little paint on those walls, open up a window, and just let it flow! . . . The room may look like it was meant for meditating 101 . . . I am not talking about Frank Sinatra music, though he is great . . . Oh would we love our teachers forever." Word choice is sometimes precise, and sentence structures are varied. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more specific facts, examples, illustrations, or anecdotes to support the choice. For example, the writer could further explain what is meant by including a "certain variety of culture" or how music and food affect learning.

I am writing about how to make a classroom more comfortable. Classrooms can be uncomfortable at times, and may affect the way you learn or preform inside the classroom. There are several different ways I am going to explain of how some classrooms are uncomfortable. Now I am going to begin to list some ways of how to make a classroom more comfortable.

First of all, the classroom desks are very uncomfortable. Most of them are made of steel and a smooth concrete-like solid. These materials make the desks nonflexible and stiff. After a while of sitting in these desks, your back begins to get sore and hurts. I do realize the desks are strong though, but I suggest that they should have some type of padding or cushion. They need to be more flexible and more supportive to your back with a cushion.

Second of all, the rooms are sometimes too cold or too hot. Most classrooms can get too cold for most of the students likings. The classrooms teacher should set the temperature at a confortable room temperature for everyone which is around 72° F. A comfortable temperature can mean a lot for a student when he or she is trying to take a test. For example, this classroom is too cold, and that makes me want to finish quicker.

Finally, I believe that some classrooms have desks too close together. This can make a student sit differently in this desk to avoid getting so close to another student. In other situations, being too close together

Go On ▶

distracts some students. If the desks could be a little more spread out, then it could cause less distractions.

Overall, classrooms aren't that bad. Some can get a little uncomfortable though. If these little problems could be fixed, then this could give some students an advantage when attempting to learn and preform. Especially when it comes down to taking a test.

SCORE POINT 4

This response is focused on the topic. The organizational plan includes a brief introduction, a description of how to transform uncomfortable classrooms, and a brief, repetitive conclusion. The "desks too close together" reason contains vague support: "This can make a student sit differently in this desk to avoid getting so close to another student . . . being too close together distracts some students." More specific support is provided for the uncomfortable desks and room temperature reasons: "Most of them are made of steel and a smooth concrete-like solid. These materials make the desks nonflexible and stiff . . . The classrooms teacher should set the temperature . . . around 72° F." The writer fails to fully explain how these changes would affect learning. Sentence structures are varied, and word choice is adequate. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could be more specific about how these classroom changes would affect the students and their learning environment. For example, more facts, examples, illustrations, or anecdotes could be provided for how the temperature of a classroom influences test-taking. More information is also needed about the distractions caused by the proximity of students to each other in the classroom. More precision in word choice would also strengthen this response.

How could we make a classroom more comfortable? My suggestions would be to have a bed and pillow for everyone. But since thats probably not going to happen a couple of other suggestions would be to have the classrooms built bigger. We could build more classrooms so that we can reduce the number of students in each room. One other suggestion would be to have bigger desks.

Bigger classroom sizes would be awesome. We would have more room to move and walk around in. If we have bigger classroom sizes the desks would be spread out more so that when you walk down the aisles you won't trip over anyone or their things.

If we could reduce the number of students in each classroom that would help a lot too. That way there would not be as many people in the classroom and you would, again, have more room to move around. If there are not as many students in each classroom then there would be more one-on-one time with the teacher to get extra help if you need it. If there are not a lot of students in one classroom, the teachers might even allow more group work since there would not be as much confusion and moving around.

If neither of those ideas work then my last suggestion would be to have bigger desks. When I say bigger I mean the surface area that we use to write on and the amount of space between us and the desk top. If we made the surface area bigger we would have more room to keep out our books, folders, papers, ect, without it falling all over the floor. If we make the desks bigger that means instead of there just being enough room for

Go On ▶

your feet, there would now be enough room for your feet and your bookbag. If there IS enough room for both, that would even help the crampness of the room, and reduce the clusters in the aisles when trying to walk by.

Although I do really like the idea of beds in classrooms or even a nap time in each room, I think these suggestions may come in handy when trying to make students feel more comfortable in their learning environment. If we make students feel more comfortable at school, who knows? Maybe they would show more interest in wanting to learn.

SCORE POINT

4

This writing is focused, and an organizational plan is apparent. Transitional devices are sometimes used effectively to provide logical connections between and among the ideas. The writer offers three suggestions for making the classroom more comfortable: larger classrooms, fewer students, and bigger desks. Although information is provided for building larger classrooms, development of the support is vague. The arguments for fewer students and bigger desks contain some specific details: "When I say bigger I mean the surface area that we use to write on and the amount of space between us and the desk top. If we made the surface area bigger we would have more room to keep out our books, folders, papers, ect., without it falling all over the floor." The writer concludes with a thought-provoking question and answer: "If we make students feel more comfortable at school, who knows? Maybe they would show more interest in wanting to learn." Word choice is adequate, and there is an attempt to vary sentence structures. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: More specific and fully elaborated support could be provided for all the reasons. For example, the student could use specific facts, examples, or anecdotes to explain why "Bigger classroom sizes would be awesome." The writer might offer figures for the optimum number of students and the surface area of desks. More varied sentence structure and more precise word choice would also strengthen this response.

MAKING A CLASSROOM MORE COMFORTABLE

A classroom is a place where teaching and learning takes place. Sometimes classes can be comfortable because there is people you know or because of the air conditioning, but sometimes classrooms can be uncomfortable. To make classrooms more comfortable, there should be more space, cushioned chairs, and more window view.

In some classrooms there should be more space. Some classes are just too crowded with all the desks crammed together. Its hard for other people to concentrate being so close together. The desks should be spread apart more or there should be less students in a class.

Another thing that would make classrooms more comfortable is cushioned chairs. It does get a little uncomfortable having to sit in the same chair, in the same position for two hours. With cushions on the seats, students would be more relaxed and less tense when it comes to tests, quizzes, etc.

Go On ▶

The final thing that would make a classroom more comfortable is more window view. Sometimes a nice view of outside helps relax when a student needs time to brainstorm about something. A window view can also help a student feel less crowded, feel a sense of open space.

In conclusion, even though the education today is good, some of the classrooms are very uncomfortable. To fix this situation students should get more spaa in classrooms, cushioned chairs, and more windows to view outside.

SCORE POINT

3

This response is clearly focused on the changes that would make a classroom more comfortable. A predictable organizational pattern is employed, including some effective transitional devices: "To make classrooms," "In some classrooms," "With cushions on the seats," and "To fix this situation." Supporting ideas are extended with bits of vague information. The "cushioned chairs" and "window view" reasons contain some specific support: "It does get a little uncomfortable having to sit in the same chair, in the same position for two hours . . . Sometimes a nice view of outside helps relax when a student needs time to brainstorm about something. A window view can also help a student feel less crowded, feel a sense of open space." Word choice is adequate, and sentence structure variation is attempted. Conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: To provide logical connections between and among the ideas, the writer could develop a more effective organizational plan. Each reason should be consistently elaborated with relevant facts, examples, illustrations, and anecdotes. For example, the writer could describe how changes to the classroom might affect him or her personally. More precise word choice, better use of conventions, and more variation in sentence structure would also strengthen this response.

How would I make my class room feel more confortable. I would first seperate the times the students come. If you do that then the class sizes would be smaller and less packed. You should probably make the 9th and 10th graders go in the first half of the day and the 11th and 12th graders in the secound half.

I would also put some plants in the class room to make you feel like your in an open medow in the middle of nowere. You can relax the kids a lot by dowing that. Their would be smaller trees in the corners and different kinds of grasses spread out in the class room.

You should also paint over the white walls. The white makes students feel like they are in a hospital or jail or something terrible. Get a profesonal artist to do like scenes from the wild such as empty medows and rainforest. That will make them feel relaxeld.

Another thing I would change is the ugly desks and use nice long tables for the students to sit at. They should be free to sit were the want and why. We should get cushrey chairs insted of the hard plastic chairs.

Go On ▶

They all might be just some ideas but some are very good ones. Well I am out of ideas. Lets put them good ideas into effect alright.

SCORE POINT
3

The writer is generally focused on how to make a classroom more comfortable, and an organizational pattern is attempted. Effective transitional devices are lacking. Each reason is consistently developed with information that briefly explains the writer's meaning: "The white makes students feel like they are in a hospital or jail or something terrible. Get a profesonal artist to do like scenes from the wild such as, empty medows and rainforest." The writer fails to provide specific supporting details to explain the effects of the proposed changes on the students. Word choice is limited and predictable, but sentence structure variation is attempted. Errors in spelling and basic conventions do not interfere with understanding.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: An organizational plan with effective transitional devices should be developed. The writer could provide facts, examples, illustrations, or anecdotes to enhance the reader's understanding. For example, the writer could use specific examples or anecdotes to further explain why a change in the school schedule would be beneficial. Precise word choice, varied sentence structure, and improved conventions would also strengthen this response.

EXPOSITORY STUDENT RESPONSE

To my dearest friend,

I have chosen you to help me with a task that I have been given. The task is to make changes in the classroom envirment to make it seem more comfortable.

The thoughts that I have will take a little bite longer then I have expected. I want you to make sure all the classrooms have windows that open. I want the students to have a spantacular feeling when they look out the window and see mother nature.

I want then to be less student bodies in the classroom so the student can be more comfortable when persenting a report or their questions. Because if they are in a large group, they would most likely be to scared to talk.

The other thing that I wanted to change is for the desks to be the same size. With the small desks students don't

Go On ▶

have a lot of room for their work. And unlike bigger desks students would feel more space for all their work and that would make themselfs more comfortable. And now that I have left. It is up to you to make these comfortable changes

your good friend,

_____

SCORE POINT 2

This response addresses the topic, and a predictable organizational pattern is attempted; however, effective transitional devices are lacking. Although supporting details are provided for each reason, the development of that support is erratic and nonspecific: "I want you to make sure all the classrooms have windows that open. I want the students to have a spantacular feeling when they look out the window and see mother nature." The fourth paragraph contains some confusing information: "The other thing that I wanted to change is for the desks to be the same size . . . And unlike bigger desks students would feel more space for all their work . . ." Word choice is limited and vague. Errors in sentence structure and basic conventions occur.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide effective transitional devices to connect the ideas. Facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations are needed to enhance the reader's understanding. The writer could use personal anecdotes to explain how fewer students and larger desks helped make his or her classroom more comfortable. Precision of word choice and improvement of basic conventions and sentence structure would also strengthen this response.

To make a Classroom more Comfortable there are many things you could do. For one you could have all the decore match. This would give the room a over all better apprence. Which in turn could give it a more comfortable feeling.

Also to make a room more comfortable you could add bigger windows. Giving more light to the students making it easer to read. Giving more light would also make the school look nicer.

Threedly you could make a room much more comforable by adding nice comfey chairs. Chairs that are big and soft That would give a Classroom a more comfortable feeling.

Maybe the classroom should be painted in School Colors. That would give a Classroom the feeling of school pride, homieness, and most of all Comfort.

SCORE POINT 2

This brief response minimally addresses the topic. An organizational pattern is attempted, including a one-sentence introduction, a list-like middle, and an abrupt conclusion. A rambling list of ideas is presented. Development of support is erratic, nonspecific, and repetitive: "Threedly you could make a room much more comforable by adding nice comfey chairs. Chairs that are big and soft. That would give a classroom a more comfortable feeling." Word choice is limited and vague, and errors occur in sentence structure and basic conventions.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should employ an organizational plan with effective transitional devices. All reasons should be consistently extended or elaborated with specific supporting facts, examples, illustrations, or anecdotes. For example, the writer could explain what is meant by having "all the decore match." What are the writer's school colors, and how would these colors promote school pride and a feeling of "homieness"? More precise word choice and varied sentence structure are needed. Correction of sentence structure and convention errors would also strengthen this response.

If I could make a classroom more comfortable I would put a chair, a sofa, and a t.v. in the classroom. I would make the classroom look clean and beautiful inside.

The classroom is going to be very comfortable because I am going to put alot of stuff in the classroom I'm going to have pictures on the wall and other kinds of stuff in my classroom.

The comfortable classroom is going to have a t.v., VCR, a bed you sleep in, and a table you can sit at while you are eating your breakfast, lunch, dinner, and supper.

I would put everything I can think of to put in my comfortable classroom I wish that the classroom could be comfortable now but its not instead of having all of these desk, computer, boards, and these broke down tables.

I wish I could make all the classrooms more comfortable by putting everything I know to put in there like chairs, tables, wall stuff, and other kinds of house stuff.

SCORE POINT 1

The writer responds to the topic, but there is no organizational plan and little, if any, development of support. The response lacks a sense of completeness or closure. Few supporting details are provided beyond a rambling list of things: "I wish I could make all the classrooms more comfortable by putting everything I know to put in there like chairs, tables, wall stuff, and other kinds of house stuff." In the fourth paragraph, some vague information is provided about the writer's current classroom: "I wish that the classroom could be comfortable now but its not instead of having all of these desk, computer, boards, and these broke down tables." The student fails to provide a clear link between the classroom wish list and how these items would make the classroom more comfortable. Word choice is limited and vague. Frequent errors in sentence structure and basic conventions do not impede meaning.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should clearly focus on a few specific ideas and provide an organizational pattern with effective transitional devices. Supporting details, elaborated with facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations, should be provided. For example, why does the writer need a bed and a place to eat in the classroom? The writer also could use a comparative writing strategy to explain the differences between the current classroom and the ideal classroom. More precise word choice is needed. Improvement and variation of sentence structures and correction of basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

EXPOSITORY STUDENT RESPONSE

Suppose I was to make a class room more comfortable. First I would make sure that there is an air conditioner in the room. Second I would put a bathroom with a sink in the room. Last I would put a couple of vending machines in the room. This is what I probably would put in a classroom to make it more comfortable.

Suppose I was to make a classroom more comfortable. First I would make sure that there's an air condition-er in the room, for the students when it is hot. with adjust-able temperature, so you can shut it off whenever it gets to cold. Plus when you are in a cooler environment you work better, then in a hot environment.

Suppose I was to make a classroom more comfortable

SCORE POINT

1

This sparse response minimally addresses the topic. An organizational plan is attempted, but the response seems incomplete. Support is inadequate and vague. The "bathroom with a sink" and the "vending machines" ideas are not developed; however, the writer offers some general support for placing air conditioners in classrooms: "for the students when it is hot. With adjustable temperature, so you can shut it off whenever it gets to cold. Plus when you are in a cooler environment you work better, then in a hot environment." Word choice is limited, and errors occur in sentence structure. Convention errors do not impede understanding.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should develop an organizational pattern with effective transitional devices. Facts, examples, illustrations, or anecdotes could be used to clarify meaning. For example, is the writer's current classroom air-conditioned? Why should sinks and vending machines be placed in classrooms? Word choice should be precise, and sentence structures should be improved. Correction of convention errors would also strengthen this response.

Persuasive Responses from the 2006 Assessment

Definition of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader to accept a particular point of view or to take a specific action. Anticipating counterarguments is important; in fact, the writer may choose to clarify his or her position by refuting counterarguments. The unmistakable purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader. In well-written persuasion, the topic or issue is clearly stated and elaborated to indicate understanding and conviction on the part of the writer.

Summary of the Persuasive Responses Written in 2006

The annotated papers in this section represent responses to a prompt that directed students to persuade a state legislator whether the voting age should be lowered from 18 to 16. Students responding to this prompt generally provided arguments supporting whether the voting age should or should not be lowered to 16. A paper was scorable if the student supported his or her position regarding the eligible age for voting. Papers that focused on the topic, displayed an organizational pattern, contained elaborated support, showed variety in sentence structure, and generally followed the conventions of writing were scored in the higher ranges of the scale.

Suggestions for Use of the Annotated Responses

Teachers may use the responses on the following pages to improve student writing skills and help students understand the scoring criteria. Each response in this publication is annotated to explain why it was assigned a particular score. Personal information has been removed or fictionalized to protect the identity of the writer. Teachers can delete the scores and annotations and make transparencies or copies of the responses. Additional instructional uses of the responses include the following:

- rank ordering the responses from highest to lowest scores;
- highlighting words and phrases that provide an organizational structure and develop the supporting ideas in a response;
- listing the strengths and weaknesses of a response;
- revising and editing a response based on either a student-generated list of the strengths and weaknesses or the annotation beneath the response (this activity might include improving the introduction and conclusion, adding transitional devices, providing more details and examples, refining word choice, and varying sentence structure);
- using the rubric and skills above to score student responses to similar prompts;
- identifying how the writer tailors the response to his or her intended audience; and
- identifying the student's position or opinion.

Congress has been given a large task to deal with: lowering the voting age. The risks are high, but the benefits can overcome the risk. Sixteen year olds are old enough to understand and take on the responsibilities of voting, and the opinions they have should be heard.

By the age of sixteen, children are turning into young adults. These teenagers are into high school, have experienced voting in school, and comprehend its meaning. These students are learning about politics and government in high school courses, and some may understand them better than their parents. By the age of sixteen, teenagers are old enough to understand right and wrong, good and bad, so they should be able to understand what is the better choice for them in voting. These young people also learn about voting procedures and politics from the people they live with, whether it is a parent or a guardian. Teens know what to do.

Voting is a great responsibility, yes, but is it greater than that of driving a car? Drivers licences are issued at age sixteen, and learners permits at younger ages. When a teen gets behind the wheel, he is taking many lives into his hands. By voting, they aren't taking lives into their hands, just voicing an opinion. While risking lives, driving also affects the surrounding of a person. An accident could destroy buildings or hold up traffic, while voting could not do this in most cases. Which is a greater responsibility, driving or voting?

Go On ▶

When many laws are passed, or politicians elected, they affect teenagers. Many adult voters don't take the needs of teenagers, or the affect they could have, into consideration. Teens know about these through experience, and could vote accordingly. Adults don't understand what teens go through, while teens obviously do. Decisions that adults make can harm teens, while helping themselves, and teens can't voice theire complaints. This needs to change, by letting teens vote.

Congress has a tough decision to make: should sixteen year olds vote? They are old enough, responsible enough, and the understand the system. Voting is a priveledge, and also a responsibility. At the age of sixteen, young people deserve the priveledge, and can handle it responsibly. The decision is in your hands; what will it be?

SCORE POINT

6

This response focuses on convincing Congress to lower the voting age to 16. The logical organizational plan and substantial support contribute to a sense of completeness. A comparative writing strategy is employed to explain why driving a car is a greater responsibility than voting: "When a teen gets behind the wheel, he is taking many lives into his hands. By voting, they aren't taking lives into their hands, just voicing an opinion . . . An accident could destroy buildings or hold up traffic, while voting could not do this in most cases." Throughout this response, a mature command of language with freshness of expression is exhibited: "These students are learning about politics and government in high school courses, and some may understand them better than their parents . . . Voting is a great responsibility, yes, but is it greater than that of driving a car? . . . Adults don't understand what teens go through, while teens obviously do." Sentence structures are varied, and few convention errors occur.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide a smoother transition and more logical connection between each of the arguments. More specific facts, examples, or anecdotes could be added to fully explain the writer's meaning. For example, the writer could provide an example to illustrate what is meant by the statement: "Decisions that adults make can harm teens, while helping themselves . . ." Correction of occasional convention errors would also enhance this response.

It's voting day in [our] County. The usual thousands of adults are lined up to vote - but there's a new group of people in line this political season.

"Dude, I'm just voting so I can get the cool sticker and stuff!" exclaims a 16-year old teenaged boy. The older voters exchange worried glances: the legislation is now allowing 16 year olds to vote.

There are many reasons why 16 year olds should not vote. These reasons include the irresponsibility, immaturity, and decision-making processes of teenagers.

The responsibilities of being a voter include choosing the candidates who you the voter think would make the best president and vice president. This decision shouldn't be made quickly, it should be thought about carefully. At 16, teenagers have not had high school level courses in United States Government, Economics, or even United States History. These courses, which they will take at ages 17 and 18, would help them make better voters. Teenagers may be aware of the responsibilities of voting, but most teenagers don't understand them.

At the young age of 16, teenagers are still immature. Presidential candidates will realize this and will use political propoganda to try to suck these teenagers in. More than likely, teenaged voters will not research the party they're voting for before they vote. They will base the majority of their vote on television commercials, posters, and other media campaigns. Plus, teenagers may not even genuinely care about voting. Most 16 year olds have other things on their minds that are more important to them than voting, but on election day they'll vote anyway because that's what their friends are doing that day.

The third reason that teenagers shouldn't be allowed to vote

Go On ▶

is their method of choosing which candidate to vote for. As stated before, many teenagers would base their vote off of commercials and posters, but there are other factors that would affect a teenager's vote. Parents, friends, and figures of authority may make a teenagers' vote biased. If a parent of a teen had a strong opinion about which ever candidate he or she were voting for, their influence may rub off on their child. The same influences could come from a teen's friends, siblings, and other authority figures such as teachers or mentors. Basically, if a teen made their decision this way, it would be the same as one person voting twice.

In conclusion, 16 year olds should not be allowed to vote because they are too irresponsible and immature to understand that the future of the government lies in their hands. Also, teenagers may not be able to make appropriate decisions on who to vote for by themselves.

SCORE POINT 6

This organized, persuasive response is clearly focused on "why 16 year olds should not vote." Effective transitional devices provide logical connections between and among the ideas. The organizational plan and substantial support contribute to a sense of completeness. The imaginative introduction reflects insight into the writing situation: "It's voting day in [our] County. The usual thousands of adults are lined up to vote—but there's a new group of people in line this political season. 'Dude, I'm just voting so I can get the cool sticker and stuff!' exclaims a 16-year old teenaged boy. The older voters exchange worried glances: the legislation is now allowing 16 year olds to vote." Each argument is consistently and substantially elaborated with facts, examples, illustrations, and anecdotes: "there are other factors that would affect a teenager's vote . . . influences could come from a teen's friends, siblings, and other authority figures such as teachers or mentors. Basically, if a teen made their decision this way, it would be the same as one person voting twice." A mature command of language with freshness of expression is demonstrated: "Teenagers may be aware of the responsibilities of voting, but most teenagers don't understand them . . . More than likely, teenaged voters will not research the party they're voting for before they vote." Sentence structures are varied, and few convention errors occur.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more specific supporting details for each argument. Rather than just repeating the arguments in the conclusion, the writer could provide additional information to support his or her position. More effective transitional devices are needed to logically connect the ideas. For example, the writer leaps too quickly from stating that students base their votes on political propaganda to "teenagers may not even genuinely care about voting."

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

When you think of 16 year old kids, do you picture them watching CNN trying to know everything thats going on in the White House or playing video games and eating pizza? Most 16 year old children are still concerning themselves over who got the highest score on "Pac Man". I don't know if it's just me, but I wouldn't want people like that voting on the future of our nation. The voting age shouldn't be lowered to 16 because younger people wouldn't have time to vote, don't really know about politics, and they can't handle the responsabilities.

First of all, at what point in the day would a 16 year old be able to vote. Besides the fact that they are in school from 7.30 to 2:30, when they get home they have homework to do. Lets say, they finish everything by 5:00, if the place where you vote isn't closed already they would have to wait in a line longer than the ones at Disney World full of voters. Another thing, 16 year old can't drive by themselves! They would have to take the metro bus or wait for someone to take them.

Furthermore, young people don't watch the news that often. If you don't watch the news it is most likely you are going to be less informed on whats going on in the White House. When you are a senior in highschool you take a class called "Government and Economics". Before that there

Go On ▶

are no classes in politics or government it's all history. So if they vote, it's just to vote. They don't know what they are voting for.

Last but not least, 16 year olds won't be able to handel the responsabilities attached with voting. If the law doesn't even allow 16 year olds to drive by themselves, how are they going to let them decide the future of our country. Also I believe that if anything were to go wrong in our economy or anything pertaining to the government, after they let 16 year olds vote, they would most likely blame it on them because they wouldn't want to be wrong.

To conclude, reasons why the voting age shouldn't be lowered to 16 is because younger people have no time to vote since they are in school, they don't really know politics since they haven't taken the class yet, and they can't handel the responsabilities.

SCORE POINT
5

This writer takes the position that the voting age should not be lowered. An organizational plan, with effective transitional devices, provides for a logical progression of ideas. The organizational plan and ample support contribute to a sense of completeness. In the introduction, the writer justifies his or her position: "When you think of 16 year old kids, do you picture them watching CNN trying to know everything thats going on in the White House or playing video games and eating pizza? Most 16 year old children are still concerning themselves over who got the highest score on 'PacMan.' I don't know if it's just me, but I wouldn't want people like that voting on the future of our nation." Although the "responsabilities" argument is developed with general, nonspecific information, support for the "time to vote" and "don't really know about politics" arguments contains more specific examples and illustrations: "When you are a senior in highschool you take a class called 'Government and Economics.' Before that there are no classes in politics or government it's all history." A mature command of language and a precise choice of words are demonstrated. Sentence structures are varied, and conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: Support for the "responsabilities" argument is minimal and sometimes vague. The writer could provide examples or anecdotes to describe the responsibilities needed for voting. The writer could then explain why he or she thinks 16-year-olds "won't be able to handel the responsabilities attached with voting." Correction of convention errors would also strengthen this response.

The right to vote is reserved for adult, mature members of society. One vote expresses one persons thoughts and feelings about how our country should be run. Do you want some irresponsible uninformed teenagers canceling out others true values with their vote they take for granted? The voting age should definatly remain 18 because 16-year-olds need more time to understand politics, a 16-year-olds priorities aren't straight, and a 16-year-old is more irresponsible.

Lets face it, teens don't know as much about politics as they should. A 16-year-old definatly does not have the background information to vote. The extra two years between 16 and 18 years of age gives one time to learn more about what hey policies they want implemented. Isn't that what the four years of high school offer? A 16-year-old needs the extra education before being thrown into such a serious decision.

The priorities of a teenager are of cds or what they want to do over the weekend. The last thing they think about is politics, We shouldn't pass down the torch of voting to those who aren't prepared.

Go On ▶

Teens need to get a chance to experience more real world problems like taxes and bills. Then, their priorities will be more syncronized with the priorities of the general adult population.

Voting is a privilage. With privilage comes responsibility. Adults have more responsibilities such as paying taxes, insurance, and bills. What responsibilities does a 16-year old have? Taking out the garbage or cleaning their rooms? They don't deserve this privilage to vote quite yet.

In conclusion, a 16-year-old isn't ready to vote. Although some teens are responsible enough, I have a feeling the general population can't handle the responsibility. I urge my legistlater to not lower the voting age to 16.

SCORE POINT 5

This writer takes the position that the "voting age should definatly remain 18 . . ." The organizational plan provides for a logical progression of ideas. Three arguments are presented: "Because 16-year-olds need more time to understand politics, a 16-year-olds priorities aren't straight, and a 16-year-old is more irresponsible." Each of these arguments is consistently elaborated, and the ample support includes some specific details and examples: "The priorities of a teenager are of cds or what they want to do over the weekend . . . Teens need to get a chance to experiance more real world problems like taxes and bills." A mature command of language with precise word choice is sometimes demonstrated: "Lets face it, teens don't know as much about politics as they should . . . We shouldn't pass down the torch of voting to those who aren't prepared . . . What responsibilities does a 16-year-old have? Taking out the garbage or cleaning their rooms?" There is some variety in sentence structure, and conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more specific facts, examples, or illustrations to support all the arguments. For example, the writer could provide anecdotal evidence to show how more years in high school will help prepare teenagers to vote. Why does the writer think that 16-year-olds would take their vote "for granted"? Expanding word choice and correcting convention errors would also strengthen this response.

Congress should lower the voting age from 18 to 16. Even though they are only two years apart at the age 16 teenagers are almost fully matured. At that age they have ample responsibilities as is. People's views, ideas, and concerns about the world around them count no matter what age, but I beleive at the age of 16, one is ready to make decisions about who will be in charge of their country, and in a way change their life.

When someone turns sixteen they are granted with the trust to operate a vehicle safely putting their life along with others at risk. If they are granted this responsibility, why not the responsibility to vote for issues that concern their well-being. If at that age they cannot vote, it is like they are being robbed of their concerns and their freedom. They need the right to choose if they go to war, the right to choose if class sizes should be reduced. A lot of the issues that have to be voted for involve people from that age group.

If Congress lowers the voting age to 16, people in that age group will get a head start and a better understanding of politics and how it works. They will become more aware of their countrys issues, environmental issues, and world conflicts. They will already know the different parties and which one to choose.

Go On ▶

They will have better knowledge about who's running for president, and what they will do to make their country, surroundings and lives better.

At the age of sweet sixteen, people should have the right to choose who will run their life, and what would be better for their future. If at that age they are responsible for their life, and others safety, I beleive they should hold the responsibility to become a licensed voter.

SCORE POINT
4

This writer takes the position that "Congress should lower the voting age from 18 to 16." An organizational pattern is apparent, and transitional devices are used effectively. Support is consistently developed and sometimes includes specific details and examples: "people in that age group will get a head start and a better understanding of politics and how it works . . . become more aware of their countrys issues, environmental issues, and world conflicts . . . already know the different parties and which one to choose . . . have better knowledge about who's running for president, and what they will do to make their country, surroundings and lives better." Word choice is adequate, and sentence structures are varied. The conventions of mechanics, usage, and spelling are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more facts, examples, illustrations, or anecdotes to support each argument. For example, the writer could provide further evidence to support the assertion that "If at that age they cannot vote, it is like they are being robbed of their concerns and their freedom." The writer could provide a stronger link between the "responsibility" of driving and the privilege of voting. More precise choice of words and better control of basic conventions would also strengthen this response.

"Veto voting"

I'm 16, Should I be able to vote now? I Personally think that Congress Should not lower the voting age and leave it at 18. 18 is when your concidered an adult So you should have adult responsibilities. voting is a major Part of being an adult, Someone at 16 may not be mature enough to understand who or what they are voting for. Alot of the voting might not even Affect them because they are Still underage.

When you are 16 in most Cases you are learning new things in life like driving and Preparing for College and the "real world". IF you lower the voting age you might as well lower the age you are consired an Adult. A Sixteen year old is Just learning in School on what laws are and how they effect us in our daily like.

I do not think I am ready to vote at sixteen, mainly for the reason that I'm not ready to make these huge descions on my own yet. When I Complete High School and am living on my own, making my own Choices, making money, that's when I Should be able to vote. When I'm 18 those descions on the ballots will really effect me as an adult unlike being 16.

Go On ▶

To conclude, leave the Voting age alone, Its been fine all these years and to lower it to 16 might cause more chaos in the world that we dont need.

SCORE POINT 4

This student takes the position that the voting age should not be lowered. An organizational plan is apparent, and some transitional devices are used effectively. An elaborated justification for the writer's position is provided in the introduction: "18 is when your concidered an adult . . . Voting is a major part of being an adult, someone at 16 may not be mature enough to understand who or what they are voting for . . . voting might not even affect them because they are still underage." Support for each argument is consistently developed, but supporting details sometime lack specificity: "If you lower the voting age you might as well lower the age you are consired an adult. A sixteen year old is just learning in school on what laws are and how they effect us in our daily like." In the conclusion, the writer predicts what might happen if the voting age is lowered: "to lower it to 16 might cause more chaos in the world that we don't need." Word choice is adequate, and sentence structures are varied. Basic conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could provide more effective transitional devices. Specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations could be used as support for the arguments. For example, the student could use anecdotal evidence to explain how "learning new things in life" affects voting. Precise word choice and improved conventions would also strengthen this response.

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

A bill has been introduced in congress to lower to the voting age to sixteen. I disagree with the bill because I do not believe at age sixteen someone is mature enough to vote. Let alone, not many sixteen year olds would want the responsibility.

First of all, I dont think at age sixteen anyone is mature enough to vote. At that age kids want to have fun and not have to worry about politics. Most probably dont even know enough to make an accurate vote.

Secondly, at the age of sixteen most would not even want the responsibility to have to worry about making such a big choice. Doing research on the beliefs would be a pretty big task not many would want to take on.

Lastly, sixteen year olds are not informed enough. American government classes cant even be taken by a student until they are in the eleventh grade. The normal sixteen year old knows as much about voting as a thriteen year old. Not being informed and knowing enough would make voting nearly impossible.

In conclusion I think it would be wrong to pass a bill to allow voting at the age sixteen. many dont want the responsibility and most cannot handle it.

SCORE POINT
3

This persuasive response focuses on the position that the voting age should not be lowered. A predictable organizational pattern is provided, but the writer fails to employ effective transitional devices to logically connect the ideas. Support is provided for each argument, but some of the supporting details seem vague and repetitive. The "informed enough" argument contains some specific details: "American government classes cant even be taken by a student until they are in the eleventh grade. The normal sixteen year old knows as much about voting as a thriteen year old." Word choice is adequate, sentence structures are varied, and conventions are generally followed.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could use effective transitional devices to connect ideas. Specific details could be provided for each argument. For example, the student could use facts, examples, or anecdotes to further explain why teenagers might not want to "worry about making such a big choice" and what is meant by "research on the beliefs." More precise word choice, better use of conventions, and more variation in sentence structure would also strengthen this response.

Voting is a privilege. It comes with responsabilities I am almost 16 and I can tell you that I don't mind not voting. I don't think I'm old enough yet. I feel that 16 is to young to really know who or what to choose when voting. Countless 16 year olds don't care enough about voting. In high school they want to be carefree and take life day by day, not worry about voting.

16 is usually the age that you learn to start driving a car. That is a big responsability. If you throw voting on them they will be stressed. Driving is a mile marker in your life. The next mile marker won't be right behind it, you will have to wait a while for it to come up.

High school already puts multiple stress on a person. Voting would not help ease that stress. We would not be able to choose important choices because we really don't understand. If I were an adult and I saw a 16 year old voting in the booth next to me I would be outraged. I would ask why they are letting young people come and make important decesions

16 is already a tough age to through so we should not make it any harder. The time will come for us to vote and we will be ready. We are just not ready now

SCORE POINT 3

The writer takes the position that "16 is to young to really know who or what to choose when voting." An organizational pattern is attempted, but the writer fails to provide needed connections between and among the ideas. Although each argument is supported with bits of additional information, the development of support is uneven. The "I don't think I'm old enough" argument is the most developed: "Countless 16 year olds don't care enough about voting. In high school they want to be carefree and take life day by day, not worry about voting . . . If I were an adult and I saw a 16 year old voting in the booth next to me I would be outraged." Word choice is limited and predictable. Errors in sentence structure, capitalization, and punctuation do not interfere with meaning.
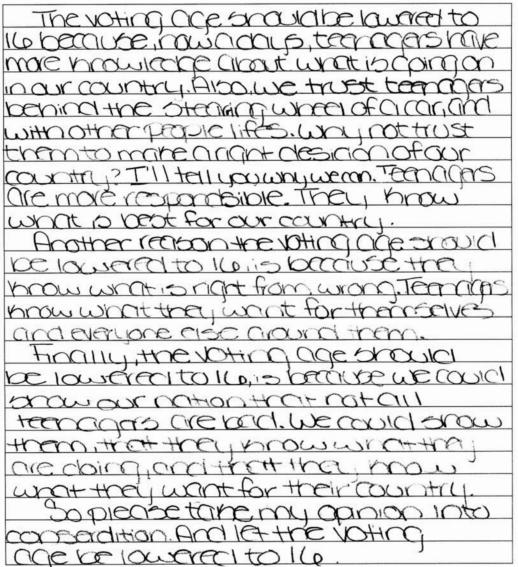
Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could use effective transitioning to signal the connections between and among ideas. Elaborated support for each argument is also needed to clarify the writer's meaning. For example, the student could use facts, examples, or anecdotes to explain why he or she thinks young people are not ready to make important decisions. Precise word choice, better sentence structure, and improved conventions would also strengthen this response.

PERSUASIVE STUDENT RESPONSE

I think lowering the voting to 16 is a good idea. 2 years are not going to effect peoples maturity, values, or responsibility. You just do not wake up one morning more mature or have greater values or take on more responsibility.

16 is the legal age to get an operators license. So say getting a drivers license is one of the first steps of becoming a mature, responsible adult. You need maturity to take voting seriously, voting for presdent or govner is no game.

You need strong values to choose the right elected offical. 16 year olds have developed values over the course of puberty. We all want to elect officals with the same strong vaules as areselfs.

It take a certain degree of responsibility to be a voter. 16 year olds develop responsibility. Mantaining a car, keeping a job, maybe owning a pet. All these thing develop responsibility.

SCORE POINT

2

This student asserts that "lowering the voting to 16 is a good idea." An organizational pattern is attempted, including a persuasive introduction: "2 years are not going to effect peoples maturity, values, or resposibility. You just do not wake up one morning more mature or have greater values or take on more resposibility." Effective transitional devices are lacking. Extended support is provided for each argument, but the development of this support is nonspecific and repetitive: "You need strong values to choose the right elected offical. 16 year olds have developed values over the course of puberty. We all want to elect officals with the same strong vaules as areselfs." In paragraph four, some specific information is provided: "Mantaining a car, keeping a job, maybe owning a pet. All these thing develop responsibility." Word choice is limited and predictable, and there is little variation of sentence structures.
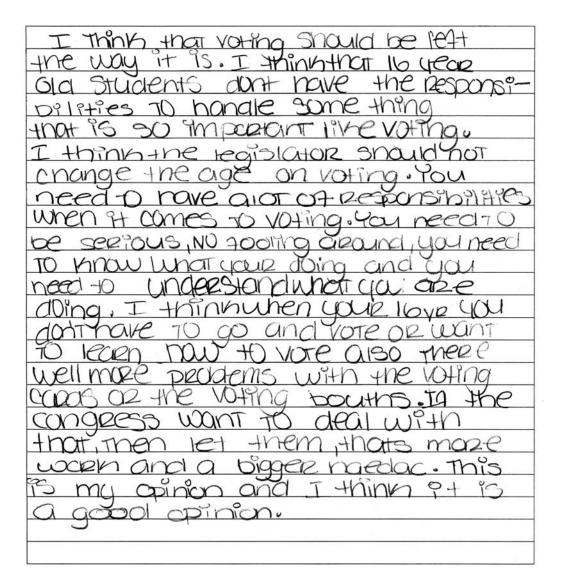
Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should employ an organizational plan with effective transitional devices. Support for each argument should be extended or elaborated through facts, examples, anecdotes, or illustrations. For example, the writer could further explain what is meant by "strong values" and provide a more logical connection between being a responsible teenager and having the right to vote. Word choice should be precise, and sentence structures should be varied. Correction of convention errors would also strengthen this response.

The voting age should be lowered to 16 because, nowadays, teenagers have more knowledge about what is going on in our country. Also, we trust teenagers behind the stearing wheel of a car, and with other people lifes. Why not trust them to make a right desicion of our country? I'll tell you why we can. Teenagers are more responsible. They know what is best for our country.

Another reason the voting age should be lowered to 16, is because they know what is right from wrong. Teenagers know what they want for themselves and everyone else around them.

Finally, the voting age should be lowered to 16, is because we could show our nation that not all teenagers are bad. We could show them, that they know what they are doing, and that they know what they want for their country.

So please take my opinion into consideration. And let the voting age be lowered to 16.

SCORE POINT 2

The writer takes the position that the voting age should be lowered to 16. An organizational pattern is attempted, but the writer fails to provide logical connections between and among the ideas. Some vague and list-like support is provided for each argument. The "respondsible" argument contains some specificity: "teenagers have more knowledge about what is going on in our country. Also, we trust teenagers behind the stearring wheel of a car, and with other people lifes." The "right from wrong" and "not all teenagers are bad" arguments are supported by repetitive and sometimes confusing information. Word choice is limited and vague. Errors in sentence structure and basic conventions do not interfere with the reader's understanding.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer could employ an organizational plan with effective transitional devices. Relevant facts, examples, or anecdotes should be provided to support the arguments. For example, the writer could clarify why he or she thinks that teenagers know what is best for our country. The writer could also provide a more logical connection between being allowed to drive and having the right to vote. Precise wording, varied sentence structure, and correct conventions would also strengthen this response.

I think that voting should be left the way it is. I think that 16 year old students dont have the responsi- bilities to handle some thing that is so important like voting. I think the legislator should not change the age on voting. You need to have alot of responsibilities when it comes to voting. You need to be serious, NO fooling around, you need to know what your doing and you need to understand what you are doing. I think when your 16yr you dont have to go and vote or want to learn how to vote also there well more prodems with the voting cards or the voting booths. If the congress want to deal with that, then let them, thats more work and a bigger haedac. This is my opinion and I think it is a goood opinion.

SCORE POINT 1

The writer takes the position that the voting age should not be lowered. The attempted organizational pattern consists of a one-sentence introduction, a briefly extended middle part, and a brief conclusion. The "responsibilities" argument is developed by bits of vague information: "You need to be serious, NO fooling around, you need to know what your doing and you need to understand what you are doing." The conclusion includes a word of caution to members of Congress: "If the congress want to deal with that, then let them, thats more work and a bigger haedac." Word choice is limited and predictable. Frequent errors in sentence structure and the basic conventions of capitalization and punctuation do not impede meaning.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should develop an organizational pattern with effective transitional devices. Supporting arguments should be presented and elaborated with facts, examples, anecdotes, and illustrations. For example, why does the writer think 16-year-olds would have more problems with the voting cards or booths? Word choice should be more precise. Correction of sentence structure and basic convention errors is needed to strengthen this response.

I think that is a big responsibility to be a voter, and for that reason I disagree about the voting age should be lowered to 16. Because those people wouldn't be sufficiently mature to make that kind of decisions. In my opinion the voting age should be highered to 18. Due to our nation depends of that, and we have to realize it.

On the other hand, if we accepted that, you think we are going to seem responsible and honest with our society (I don't think so) Why? because we wouldn't be doing well.
Up to a certain point, we would affect our own families.

In conclusion I would like to say that, we have to really think about the dangers that this might cause in our state.

SCORE POINT 1

The writer fails to take a clear position in this rambling response. There is little attempt to develop an organizational pattern or to provide relevant support. In the first paragraph, the writer offers some vague and confusing support for not lowering the voting age: "I think that is a big responsibility to be a voter, and for that reason I disagree about the voting age should be lowered to 16. Because those people wouldn't be sufficiently mature to make that kind of decisions . . . Due to our nation depends of that, and we have to realize it." In paragraph two, the writer's rambling discourse is, at times, incomprehensible: "On the other hand, if we accepted that, you think we are going to seem responsible and honest with our society (I don't think so) Why? because we wouldn't be doing well." Word choice is limited, predictable, and vague. Frequent errors occur in sentence structure and basic conventions.

Draft responses are planned and written in a 45-minute time period. This response could be strengthened by employing the following strategies: The writer should take a definite position and provide an organizational pattern with effective transitional devices. Supporting arguments should be presented and elaborated with facts, examples, anecdotes, and illustrations. For example, the writer could explain why some young people are not mature enough to vote and the kinds of decisions that voters have to make. Word choice should be precise. Correction of sentence structure and basic convention errors would also strengthen this response.

Appendix A
Glossary

Census Writing Assessment – testing of all students in a particular grade level to measure the writing proficiency of students and schools

Conventions – commonly accepted rules of edited American English (e.g., spelling, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure)

Draft – preliminary version of a piece of writing that may need revision of details, organization, and conventions

Expository Writing – writing that gives information, explains why or how, clarifies a process, or defines a concept

Field Test – testing a representative sample of the state's student population to determine the effectiveness of an assessment instrument

Focus – relationship of supporting details to the main idea, theme, or unifying point
    Loosely Related – only slightly related
    Extraneous – not related

Holistic Scoring – method by which trained readers evaluate the overall quality of a piece of writing according to pre-defined criteria

Narrative Writing – writing that recounts a personal or fictional experience or tells a story based on a real or imagined event

Organization – structure or plan of development (beginning, middle, and end) and the transitional devices used to arrange the ideas
    Transitional Devices – words, terms, phrases, and sentence variations used to arrange and signal the movement of ideas. For example, "next, and then, in the end, another reason, after that we went, another way to look at it" are transitional devices.

Performance Task – test item (prompt) that requires a student to write a response instead of choosing one from several choices

Persuasive Writing – writing that attempts to convince the reader that a point of view is valid or that the reader should take a specific action

Prompt – writing assignment that states the writer's task, including the topic and purpose of the writing

Rangefinders – student responses used to illustrate score points on the rubric

Response – writing that is stimulated by a prompt

Rubric – scoring description for each score point of the scale

Scorer – person trained to score student responses

Support – quality of details illustrating or explaining the central theme
   Bare – use of a detail or a simple list that focuses on events or reasons. For example, "I like to go to school because it is fun."
   Extended – use of information that begins to clarify meaning. For example, "I like to go to school because it is fun when the teacher allows us to do experiments with frogs."
   Layered – use of a series of informational statements that collectively help to clarify meaning. For example, "I like to go to school because it is fun when the teacher allows us to do experiments with frogs. We learned what kinds of foods frogs like to eat by offering them flies, worms, and seeds. We observed the frogs during the morning and afternoon to determine when they were more active. We also compared frogs to other amphibians to see what characteristics they share."
   Elaborated – use of additional details, anecdotes, illustrations, and examples that further clarify meaning. Information that answers the question, "What do you mean?" For example, "I like to go to school because it is fun when the teacher allows us to do experiments with frogs instead of just reading about frogs in books. Experiments allow us to have the fun of discovering for ourselves how far and how fast frogs can jump and what kinds of foods frogs like to eat." Elaboration could also provide a detailed description of the experiments.

Writing Process – recursive steps of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, evaluating, and sharing used in the development of a piece of writing

Appendix B
FCAT Writing+ Performance Task Assessment Directions, Answer Book, and Planning Sheet

Assessment Directions

The following is a synopsis of the directions test administrators read to students for the essay portion of the assessment:

Today you are going to complete a writing exercise and it is important for you to do as well as you can. Your scored response will be returned to your school as part of your school record.

The prompt on page 2 of your answer book explains what you are going to write about and gives you some ideas for planning your writing. You may use the planning sheet for jotting down ideas and planning and organizing what you will write.

After planning what you will write, begin the writing that will be scored on page 3. You may continue your writing on page 4. You do not have to fill up both of these pages, but you should respond completely to the prompt.

The writing should be easy to read and show that you can organize and express your thoughts clearly and completely.

Your writing may be about something real or make-believe, but remember you are to write ONLY about the prompt on page 2 of your folder.

You may give your writing a title if you would like, but you do not have to title your writing.

You may NOT use a dictionary. If you do not know how to spell a word, sound the word out and do the best you can.

You may either print or write in cursive. It is important to write neatly.

Remember, you must first read your prompt and then plan what you will write. I cannot read your prompt to you or help you plan what to write. You must read and plan yourself.

You have a total of 45 minutes to read, plan, and respond to your prompt. I will let you know when you have 10 minutes left.

If you finish early, check your work and make corrections to improve your writing.

PROMPT

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE.

PLANNING SHEET

Remember, use this sheet for planning what you will write. The writing on this sheet will **NOT** be scored. Only the writing in the writing folder WILL be scored.

SAMPLE

Appendix C
FCAT Writing+ Prompt Specifications
and
Prompt Evaluation Form

Specification for Expository Writing Prompts

The purpose of prompt specification is to ensure that the prompt tells the students the subject (topic) and purpose of writing. Prompts are developed to elicit writing for a desired purpose. One such purpose is exposition. Exposition is writing that gives information, explains how or why, clarifies a process, or defines a concept. Though objective and not dependent on emotion, expository writing may be lively, engaging, and reflective of the writer's underlying commitment to the topic. The unmistakable purpose of expository writing is to inform, clarify, explain, define, and/or instruct.

Cue words that should be used in expository prompts are *why, how,* and *what.*

Prompts contain two types of statements: Writing Situation and Directions for Writing. Each element of the prompt may be one or several sentences long.

Writing Situation   The writing situation statement directs the student to write about a specific topic described by a key word or phrase. This topic serves as the central theme of the student's written response. The statement provides examples or definitions of the topic. The intent is to provide a common understanding of the topic by expanding, restating, or clarifying it for the student. The intent is not to preclude the student's narrowing or restating of the topic to suit his or her own plan.

Example:
Most teenagers have chores.

Directions for Writing   The directions for writing include a strategy statement that suggests an approach for those students who might have some difficulty getting started.

Example:
Think about why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Now write to explain why it is important for teenagers to have chores.

Specification for Persuasive Writing Prompts

The purpose of prompt specification is to ensure that the prompt tells the students the subject (topic) and purpose of writing. Persuasive prompts are developed to elicit writing for a desired purpose and audience. Persuasion is writing that attempts to convince the reader that a point of view is valid and/or that the reader should take a specific action. If it is important to present other sides of an issue, the writer does so, but in a way that makes his or her position clear. The unmistakable purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader.

Cue words that should be used in persuasive prompts are *convince, persuade,* and *why.* Persuasive prompts should avoid the term *how* because it tends to elicit narrative or expository writing.

Prompts contain two types of statements: Writing Situation and Directions for Writing. Each element of the prompt may be one or several sentences long.

Writing Situation   The writing situation statement directs the student to write about a specific topic described by a key word or phrase. This topic serves as the central theme of the student's written response. The statement provides examples or definitions of the topic. The intent is to provide a common understanding of the topic by expanding, restating, or clarifying it for the student. The intent is not to preclude the student's narrowing or restating of the topic to suit his or her own plan.

> Example:
> *The principal at your school has suggested that watching TV causes students' grades to drop.*

Directions for Writing   The directions for writing include a strategy statement that suggests an approach for those students who might have some difficulty getting started.

> Example:
> *Think about the effect watching television has on your grades and your friends' grades.*
>
> *Now write to convince your principal whether watching television causes students' grades to drop.*

FCAT Writing+ Prompt Evaluation Form

Prompt ID_____ **Grade Level**_____ **Date**_____

INTEREST LEVEL

____Yes ____No 1. Will the topic be of interest to students at this grade level?

Comments

BIAS

____Yes ____No 2. Is the topic free of bias?

____Yes ____No 3. Is the wording free of bias?

____Yes ____No 4. Is the topic general enough to be readily accessible to students at this grade level? (Would most students know something about the topic?)

____Yes ____No 5. Will students be able to respond without becoming overly emotional or upset?

Comments

PURPOSE OF WRITING

____Yes ____No 6. Is the prompt well-suited for the desired purpose?

Comments

WORDING OF PROMPT

____Yes ____No 7. Is the wording of the prompt clear?

____Yes ____No 8. Is the readability appropriate for the majority of students?

____Yes ____No 9. Are components, such as the writing situation and the directions for writing, compatible?

Comments

ORGANIZATION OF RESPONSE

____Yes ____No 10. Does the prompt allow for student preference in the choice of an organizational plan?

Comments

DEPTH OF SUPPORT

____Yes ____No 11. Will the prompt discourage list-like support?

____Yes ____No 12. Is the prompt manageable within the 45-minute testing period?

____Yes ____No 13. Will the prompt allow for substantial development of the topic?

Comments

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

____Yes ____No 14. Should the prompt be used as it is written?

Comments

Reviewer's Signature _____

Appendix D
Scorer Bias

Scorer bias refers to factors that have no basis in the scoring criteria or rubric but have an effect on a scorer's perception of a student response. Scorers are trained to avoid these biases because research indicates that biases can interfere with consistent application of the scoring rubric.

1. **Reactions to Writing Criteria from Other Assessments, Previous Experience with Writing Instruction, or the Use of the Test or Test Scores.** Do you prefer the scoring criteria of another project, state, or grade level? Do you have an issue with writing instruction, the appropriateness of the rubric, or the soundness of the administration or use of the assessment? Do you have expectations about the kind of writing students should be doing? Your role is to score the responses according to the scoring standards rather than to react to the scoring criteria, administration procedures, or the use of the assessment.

2. **Appearance of Response.** How does the paper look at first glance? How long is the response? Length and development of support or quality of writing are not the same things. You should not be influenced by handwriting, neatness, and margins. Handwriting ability and writing ability are not the same things. Length and legibility are not scoring criteria; therefore, you may not consider these aspects of "writing" in the evaluation of a student's writing ability. The quality of the response, rather than the appearance of the response, is part of Florida's scoring criteria.

3. **Knowledge of Topic.** Are you knowledgeable about the topic? When evaluating student responses, you should consistently adhere to the scoring standards, regardless of your expertise (or lack of expertise) about the topic.

4. **Reactions to Style.** Does the student begin sentences with "And" or "But"; use an informal tone; use first person; use clichés; place the thesis statement in the conclusion rather than in the introduction; use one-sentence paragraphs; or choose a formulaic, a traditional, or a non-traditional organizational structure? Does the use of a particular stylistic or organizational method prejudice your scoring? Are you unduly influenced by the use of one well-turned phrase in what otherwise is a non-illustrative response? Florida's scoring criteria do not mandate a particular style or organizational structure.

5. **Reactions to Content.** Has the student used vulgar or violent content? Is the response mundane? Does the student include information that either subtly or directly identifies the student's culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual preference, or exceptionality? Does the student come across as brash, shy, cute, honest, willing to take a chance, or being like (or unlike) you were at that age? Your views about any of the preceding should never influence your scoring. You should judge the student's ability to communicate, not the student's personality or voice. All scores must reflect the scoring standards.

6. **Transference in Scoring.** Have many responses looked a great deal alike? Is your scoring prejudiced by previously scored responses? In spite of the sameness or uniqueness of responses, an individual student wrote each response. You are responsible for applying the scoring criteria to each response as if it is the only response. Your judgment of a paper should never be influenced by the characteristics and quality of a previously scored paper.

7. **Well-being of Scorer.** Is your physical or mental state impeding your scoring accuracy? Each student's score must reflect the scoring standards and not your state of mind, state of health, or state of rest.

Appendix E
Instructional Implications for Each Score Point
Grade 10

6 Points   According to the rubric, the writing is tightly focused, logically organized, and substantially developed. It demonstrates a mature command of language, including precision in word choice. Sentences vary in structure, and conventions are generally correct.

A score of 6 does not mean that the paper is perfect. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- organizing internal elements (using a beginning, middle, and end for each idea and not just for the total paper);
- elaborating on supporting ideas;
- using precise language;
- correcting convention errors; and
- achieving the intended purpose for writing.

5 Points   According to the rubric, the writing is clearly focused, logically organized, and amply developed. A mature command of language is demonstrated; however, word choice may not be precise. Sentences vary in structure, and conventions are generally correct. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- organizing internal elements (using a beginning, middle, and end for each idea and not just for the total paper);
- elaborating on supporting ideas;
- using precise language;
- correcting convention errors; and
- achieving the intended purpose for writing.

4 Points   According to the rubric, the writing is focused but may contain loosely related information, may lack internal organization, and may include weak support or examples. Word choice is adequate. Sentences vary in construction, and conventions are generally correct. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- removing loosely related information;
- strengthening the organizational pattern to ensure that no lapses occur and that transitional devices move the reader from one sentence, argument, or explanation to the next;
- developing the supporting ideas through extensions, elaborations, or both; and
- improving word choice; and
- presenting and maintaining the intended purpose for writing.

3 Points   According to the rubric, the writing is generally focused but may contain loosely related information, a simplistic organizational pattern, and undeveloped details or examples. Word choice is adequate. There is some variation in sentence structure, and conventions are generally correct. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- removing loosely related information;
- strengthening the organizational pattern to include transitional devices and a logical progression of ideas;
- developing the supporting ideas through extensions, elaborations, or both;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety; and
- targeting the intended purpose for writing.

2 Points   According to the rubric, the writing is focused but may contain extraneous information, a simplistic organizational pattern, and undeveloped details or examples. Word choice may be limited. Most sentences are simple constructions, and convention errors occur. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- removing the extraneous information;
- developing the organizational pattern to include a beginning, middle, end, and transitional devices;
- extending supporting ideas;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety;
- correcting spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence construction errors; and
- identifying and addressing the writing purpose.

1 Point   According to the rubric, the writing addresses the topic but may follow a simplistic organizational pattern and contain little relevant support. Word choice is limited or inappropriate. Frequent convention errors may occur. In most cases, the writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- effective planning, drafting, revising, and editing;
- removing the extraneous and loosely related information;
- developing an organizational pattern to include a beginning, middle, end, and transitional devices;
- extending supporting ideas;
- improving word choice;
- increasing sentence variety;
- correcting spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence construction errors; and
- identifying and addressing the writing purpose.

Unscorable: Insufficient Response or Response Not Related to Assigned Topic   According to the rubric, the writing addressing the topic was insufficient or did not address the assigned topic. The writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes developing support or focusing on the assigned topic.

Unscorable: No Response or Unreadable Response   According to the rubric, the writing folder is blank, or the response is illegible. The writing could be improved by instruction that emphasizes

- arranging words so meaning is conveyed; or
- writing a sufficient amount and addressing the prompt so scoring is facilitated.

Appendix F
Recommended Readings

Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

> *Mechanically Inclined* is the culmination of years of experimentation that merges the best of writer's workshop elements with relevant theory about how and why skills should be taught. It connects theory about using grammar in context with practical instructional strategies, explains why kids often don't understand or apply grammar and mechanics correctly, focuses on attending to the "high payoff," or most common errors in student writing, and shows how to carefully construct a workshop environment that can best support grammar and mechanics concepts.

Atwell, Nancie. *Coming to Know: Writing to Learn in the Intermediate Grades*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990.

> This is a book for teachers who are ready to put writing to work across the curriculum—to abandon the encyclopedia-based approach and ask their students to write as literary critics, scientists, historians, and mathematicians.

Atwell, Nancie. *Lessons That Change Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.

> In this book, teachers can access the author's comprehensive writing lesson plans. Included are mini-lessons for Grades 5–9: a yearlong writing workshop curriculum.

Baines, Lawrence and Anthony J. Kunkel, Editors. *Going Bohemian: Activities That Engage Adolescents in the Art of Writing Well*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000.

> This book is a collection of "tried and true" lesson plans from classroom teachers and university faculty. The activities often advocate using innovative strategies, competitive games, interdisciplinary methods, art and multimedia, and indirect approaches to teaching some of the difficult lessons of writing.

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1999.

> This book strives to help teachers create a classroom community infused with real-life conversations among students and offers ways to organize the curriculum around these essential conversations. It also provides practical methods to create the necessary intellectual and emotional environments which allow important discussions to take place.

Burke, Jim. *Writing Reminders: Tools, Tips, and Techniques*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.

> This book is designed for educators to read at any time: between periods, while planning, even while teaching, to make every minute count in the classroom, and to help educators work smarter and more effectively.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick and Shelly Harwayne. *Living Between the Lines*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990.

> This is an invitation to bring new life into reading-writing workshops. This book weaves insights, practical suggestions, references, and anecdotes into an inspirational story.

Carnicelli, Thomas. *Words Work*. With a foreword by Jim Burke. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2001.

> The premise of this book is that students would read, write, and perhaps even think better if they knew more about words. With this in mind, this text, successfully tested in middle and high schools, contains activities which allow students to explore words and develop their language arts and thinking skills.

Clark, Roy Peter. *Free to Write: A Journalist Teaches Young Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987.

> This book offers hundreds of practical ideas on how to turn elementary and middle school students into better writers and learners.

Cole, Ardith Davis. *Better Answers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

> *Better Answers* is an outgrowth of Cole's work with students who have not met state standards in English language arts. Cole has developed an easy-to-implement, step-by-step protocol, the "Better Answer" formula, which helps students focus on the task at hand. It is a process that begins with teacher modeling, invites increasing amounts of student participation, and eventually moves students into independent response writing.

Cunningham, Patricia M., Sharon Arthur Moore, James W. Cunningham, and David W. Moore. *Reading and Writing in Elementary Classrooms*. New York City, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, 2000.

> The four authors of this book have created a resource offering teachers new strategies and observations regarding elementary reading and writing. The book features pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading activities.

Davis, Judy and Sharon Hill. *The No-Nonsense Guide to Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.

> The authors of this book describe the organization of a successful year long writing workshop, including an abundance of specific how-to details.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing With Power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981.

> Through a broad spectrum of ingenious ideas, this book shows how to develop students' natural writing ability.

Fiderer, Adele. *Mini-Lessons for Teaching Writing*. Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic, 1997.

> Using excerpts from favorite children's authors' work, this book, aimed at Grades 3–6, takes its reader through the essentials of good writing. The succinct mini-lessons address elements such as choosing meaningful topics, organizing ideas, punctuating dialogue, and much more.

Fletcher, Ralph and JoAnn Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

> This book was written primarily for new teachers and others who are unfamiliar with the writing workshop. It is a practical guide providing all of the elements a teacher needs to develop and implement a writing workshop—and to empower young writers.

Florida Department of Education. *Florida Writes!* Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Education, 2006.

> *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 4; Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8;* and *Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10* describe the development, purpose, content, and application of the writing assessment program, and they suggest activities that are helpful in preparing students for the assessment.

Fountas, Irene C. and Gay Su Pinnell. *Guiding Readers and Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

> This resource book explores all the essential components of a quality upper elementary literacy program (Grades 3–6).

Hansen, Jane. *When Writers Read*. Second Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

> *When Writers Read* is about what students can do to become better evaluators of themselves as writers and readers, and how their teachers can help. The book is organized around five concepts that are central to an effective writing-reading program: voices, decisions, time, response, and self-discipline.

Harris, Karen and Steve Graham. *Making the Writing Process Work: Strategies for Composition and Self-Regulation*. With a foreword by Donald Meichenbaum. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1999.

> This book focuses on strategies to help students think about and organize their writing while they manage overall writing content and organization. The methods introduced in this book are particularly appropriate for struggling writers.

Jago, Carol. *Beyond Standards: Excellence in the High School English Classroom*. With a foreword by Sheridan Blau. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2001.

> Packed with detailed classroom anecdotes, *Beyond Standards* explores ways teachers can select books, design lessons, and inspire discussions that can lead their students to produce excellent work. This book offers vivid examples of student work and concrete suggestions about how to foster student commitment to achievement in the classroom.

Jenson, Eric. *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.

> This innovative book balances psychological research of brain functioning (related to such things as emotion, memory, and recall) with practical, easy-to-understand concepts regarding learning and the brain. It also offers successful tips and techniques for using that information in classrooms, producing an invaluable tool which can allow educators to better reach students.

Johnson, Bea. *Never Too Early to Write: Adventures in the K–1 Writing Workshop*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Publishing, Inc., 1999.

> This book shows teachers, administrators, and parents how to have a successful year-long writing program. It demonstrates that a very valuable literacy tool is not expensive. It utilizes reading-readiness materials already in use and requires no special teaching aids.

Jorgensen, Karen. *The Whole Story: Crafting Fiction in the Upper Elementary Grades*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

> The author takes you inside her classroom, demonstrating how she gives lessons, conducts conferences, and facilitates sharing to help writers develop and refine stories.

Kropp, Paul and Lori Jamison Rog. *The Write Genre*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishing, 2005.

> Build a foundation for writing with effective lessons that are the key to powerful writing workshops. These practical lessons explore the main elements of writing, with explicit strategies for teaching the major styles: informational writing, poetry and personal writing, and narrative. The authors also provide more than 30 effective tools that are ready to copy and use in the classroom—writing checklists, rubrics for assessment, graphic organizers, tips for proofing, and much more.

McCarrier, Andrea, Gay Su Pinnell, and Irene C. Fountas. *Interactive Writing: How Language & Literacy Come Together, K–2*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000.

> This guide offers a powerful teaching method designed to accelerate and support children's critical understanding of the writing process. *Interactive Writing* is specifically focused on the early phases of writing and has special relevance to pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and Grade 1 and 2 teachers.

Moats, Louisa Cook. *Speech to Print*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2001.

> The language essentials offered in this book will enable teachers to identify, understand, and solve the problems students with or without disabilities may encounter when learning to read and write.

Mueller, Pamela N. *Lifers: Learning from At-Risk Adolescent Readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

> Twenty-two high school students are introduced to readers as "lifers"—students who have spent all their lives in remedial programs. Unwilling to accept that they will remain "lifers," Pamela Mueller offers her own solutions through three reading workshops she and her colleagues implemented, which are fully described in this book.

Muschla, Gary Robert. *The Writing Teacher's Book of Lists: With Ready-To-Use Activities and Worksheets*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1991.

> This book is divided into six sections containing a total of seventy-four lists. The teaching suggestions that accompany each list provide valuable information, methods, and techniques for teaching writing, while the activities enable students to improve their writing skills as they apply the knowledge gained from the lists.

Noguchi, Rei R. *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991.

> Some research indicates the formal study of grammar does not improve student writing and, in fact, takes time away from writing activities. To make more time available for writing activities, the author suggests reducing the length and breadth of formal grammar instruction and instead introduces the concept of a streamlined "writer's grammar."

Overmeyer, Mark. *When Writing Workshop Isn't Working*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005

> *When Writing Workshop Isn't Working* provides practical advice to overcome common problems and get your writing workshop back on track. Acknowledging the process-based nature of the writing workshop, the author does not offer formulaic, program-based, one-size-fits-all answers; rather, he presents multiple suggestions based on what works in real classrooms.

Ray, Katie Wood. *The Writing Workshop: Working through the Hard Parts (And They're All Hard Parts)*. With Lester L. Laminack. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

> In this book, Katie Wood Ray offers a practical and comprehensive guide about the writing workshop for both new and experienced teachers. She offers chapters on all challenging aspects of the writing workshop, including day-to-day instruction, classroom management, and many other topics.

Ray, Katie Wood. *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999.

> Drawing on stories from classrooms, examples of student writing, and illustrations, Katie Wood Ray explains in practical terms the theoretical underpinnings of how elementary and middle school students learn to write from reading.

Reid, Janine and Jann Wells. *Writing Anchors*. Peterborough, NH: Crystal Springs Books, 2005.

> This comprehensive handbook shows how to build a foundation for writing with effective lessons that are key to powerful writing workshops. It provides information about creating a supportive classroom, modeling writing experiences, and generating enthusiasm for writing among students. Includes explicit strategies for teaching these major forms of writing: informational writing, poetry and personal writing, and narrative writing.

Strong, William. *Coaching Writing.* With a foreword by Tom Romano. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

> This book presents a "coaching approach" to writing instruction: an approach that centers on working smarter, not harder, to reduce the risk of teacher burnout. Chapters in the book offer a variety of educator resources ranging from Strong's own experiences with basic writers to successfully managing the paper load.

Thompson, Thomas C., ed. *Teaching Writing in High School and College.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2002.

> An illuminating collection of encouraging narratives and studies suggesting that secondary-postsecondary partnerships and exchanges can significantly improve students' ability to succeed at college-level writing tasks.

Tsujimoto, Joseph. *Lighting Fires: How the Passionate Teacher Engages Adolescent Writers.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 2001.

> This book contains writing assignments, exercises, a few adult examples, and student writings collected by the author over the years. It shows specific ways that the author motivated students to write.

Wollman-Bonilla, Julie. *Family Message Journals: Teaching Writing through Family Involvement.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.

> This book follows the development of emergent and beginning writers as they explore the power and joy of written communication. Wollman-Bonilla's analysis of how two primary grade teachers implement *Family Message Journals* in their classrooms illustrates that the journals are a workable, realistic, and effective strategy for literacy and content-area learning.

Worsham, Sandra. *Essential Ingredients: Recipes for Teaching Writing.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001.

> This book shows that the kind of writing that successful writers do is the kind of writing we should be teaching in school. It details the characteristics of effective writing and implications for use in the classroom.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well, 25th Anniversary Edition.* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2001.

> This is a helpful and readable guide to writing. With more than a million copies sold, this book has stood the test of time and continues to be a valuable tool for writers and would-be writers.

Appendix G
FCAT Publications and Products

The Department of Education produces many materials to help educators, students, and parents better understand the FCAT program. A list of FCAT-related publications and products is provided below. Additional information about the FCAT program is available on the FCAT home page of the DOE web site at http://www.fldoe.org.

About the FCAT Web Brochure

> This web-based brochure is found on the DOE web site in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole and provides information about FCAT Reading, Writing+, Mathematics, and Science for Grades 3–11. It is designed to provide a summary, as well as detailed information, across grades and subject areas and to link the reader to other helpful DOE web resources.

Assessment & Accountability Briefing Book

> This book provides an overview of Florida's assessment, school accountability, and teacher certification programs. FCAT topics include frequently asked questions, content assessed by the FCAT, reliability, and validity. This booklet can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

FCAT Handbook—A Resource for Educators

> This publication provides the first comprehensive look at the FCAT including history, test content, test format, test development and construction, test administration, and test scoring and reporting. Educator involvement is emphasized, demonstrating how Florida teachers and administrators participate in reviewing test items, determining how standards should be assessed, finding ranges of scores, and providing input on aspects of the test administration process. The PDF version is available on the DOE web site.

FCAT Myths vs. Facts

> By providing factual information about the FCAT program, this brochure addresses common concerns about the FCAT that are based on myths. It is also available in Spanish and can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

FCAT Performance Task Scoring—Practice for Educators (publications and software)

These materials are designed to help teachers learn to score FCAT Reading, Writing, and Mathematics performance tasks at Grades 4, 5, 8, and 10. *A Trainer's Guide* includes instructions for using the scoring publications and software in teacher education seminars and workshops. The publications mirror the scorer training experiences by presenting samples of student work for teachers to score.

FCAT Posters

Newly designed 17" by 23" elementary, middle, and high school FCAT Reading, Writing+, Science, and Mathematics posters have an instructional focus. Two additional posters provide information about achievement levels and which FCAT tests are given at each grade. A high school poster reminds students about the graduation requirement to pass the FCAT Reading and Mathematics tests and the multiple opportunities available to retake the tests. New posters were delivered to districts in August 2005 and are available at district assessment offices.

FCAT Released Tests

 Reading, Grades 4, 8, and 10
 Mathematics, Grades 4, 8, and 10

In the fall 2005, DOE released previously used full tests of FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics for Grades 4, 8, and 10. This web-based release included not only the tests, but also several other important documents including answer keys, *How to Use the FCAT Released Tests, How to Score the FCAT Released Tests,* and *Frequently Asked Questions about the FCAT Released Tests*. These supplemental materials provide many details about the FCAT that are informative for all audiences, especially, the range of correct answers and points needed for each achievement level. All materials are available on the DOE web site.

FCAT Results Folder: A Guide for Parents and Guardians

This folder is designed for parents and guardians of students in Grades 3–11. It provides information about FCAT student results and allows parents to store student reports for future reference. Spanish and Haitian Creole versions are available. Delivery coincides with spring delivery of student reports.

FCAT Test Item Specifications
> *Reading, Grade Levels 3–5, 6–8, and 9–10*
> *Mathematics, Grade Levels 3–5, 6–8, and 9–10*
> *Science, Grades 5, 8, and 10*
> *Writing+ draft versions, Grades 4, 8, and 10*

> Defining both the content and the format of the FCAT test questions, the *Specifications* primarily serve as guidelines for item writers and reviewers, but also contain information for educators and the general public. The *Specifications* are designed to be broad enough to ensure test items are developed in several formats to measure the concepts presented in each benchmark. These materials can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

Florida Reads! Report on the 2006 FCAT Reading Released Items (Grades 4, 8 & 10)
Florida Solves! Report on the 2006 FCAT Mathematics Released Items (Grades 5, 8 & 10)
Florida Inquires! Report on the 2006 FCAT Science Released Items (Grades 5, 8 & 11)

> These reports provide information about the scoring of the FCAT Reading, Mathematics, and Science performance tasks displayed on the 2006 student reports. *Florida Reads!* combines Grades 4, 8, and 10 in one document; *Florida Solves!* covers Grades 5, 8, and 10; and *Florida Inquires!* includes Grades 5, 8, and 11. The reports are available each May.

Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 4
Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 8
Florida Writes! Report on the 2006 FCAT Writing+ Assessment, Grade 10

> Each grade-level publication describes the content and application of the FCAT Writing+ tests and offers suggestions for activities that may be helpful in preparing students for the assessments. The reports are available each May.

Frequently Asked Questions About FCAT

> This brochure provides answers to frequently asked questions about the FCAT program and is available on the DOE web site.

Keys to FCAT, Grades 3–5, 6–8, and 9–11

> These booklets are distributed each January and contain information for parents and students preparing for FCAT Reading, Writing+, Mathematics, and Science. *Keys to FCAT* are translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole and are available, along with the English version, on the DOE web site.

Lessons Learned—FCAT, Sunshine State Standards and Instructional Implications

This document provides an analysis of previous years' FCAT results and contains analyses of FCAT Reading, Writing, and Mathematics state-level data through 2000. The analysis will assist educators in interpreting and understanding their local FCAT scores, which will help improve instruction in the classroom. The PDF version is available on the DOE web site.

Sample Test Materials for the FCAT
   Reading and Mathematics, Grades 3–10
   Science, Grades 5, 8, and 11
   Writing+, Grades 4, 8, and 10

These materials are produced and distributed each fall for teachers to use with students. The student's test booklet contains a list of the different kinds of FCAT questions, practice questions, and hints for answering them. The teacher's answer key provides the correct answer, an explanation for the correct answer, and also indicates which Sunshine State Standards benchmark is being assessed by each question. These booklets are available in PDF format on the DOE web site.

The New FCAT NRT: Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT10)

This brochure outlines differences between the previous FCAT NRT (SAT9) and the current FCAT NRT (SAT10) and provides specifications of the classifications and composition of the reading and mathematics NRT assessments. It is available in PDF format on the DOE web site.

Understanding FCAT Reports

This booklet provides information about the FCAT student, school, and district reports for the recent test administration. Samples of reports, explanations about the reports, and a glossary of technical terms are included. Distribution to districts is scheduled to coincide with the delivery of student reports each May. The booklet can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

What every teacher should know about FCAT

This document provides suggestions for all subject-area teachers to use in helping their students be successful on the FCAT. It can be downloaded from the DOE web site.

Florida Department of Education, Assessment and School Performance
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400   (850) 245-0513 or SUNCOM 205-0513
http://www.fldoe.org

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 A B C D E