

Essential Skills

Work Sample Development: Writing

Including content from Appendix K of the Test Administration Manual

Guidelines/Requirements

Secure Maintenance

For work samples to be a valid assessment of student knowledge and skills, the work samples must be securely maintained, including updating and replacing content. Students must not be able to access—or hear about—the work sample content prior to administration.

Aligned to Content Standards

Work samples must align with the state content standards for the skill area being assessed. For example questions about reading selections, prompts for writing, topics for speaking, and problems for mathematics must clearly provide students with opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in the content standards being assessed in the work sample.

Recommendations

Prompts

Prompts may be on general topics or they may be topics in the curriculum. Curriculum-embedded prompts arise naturally out of classroom activities and units of study, such as a teachers asking students to write an essay as a concluding activity for a unit and following work sample administration guidelines while the students write their essay. Regardless of whether the topic is general or curriculum embedded, students should have sufficient background experience and/or knowledge on the topics.

Keep in mind that the prompt must produce a work samples the provides enough evidence of proficiency so that it can be scored using the Writing Scoring Guide. Responses shorter than 1 - 1½ pages are usually too short; more than 4 pages, too long.

Choice

Whenever possible, work samples should be designed to offer student choices, whether the choice is among several prepared topics or a topic generated by the student. Students usually perform better when they are able to exercise some choice and when they have had some experience with the subject or topic.