



Formative Single-Point Rubric

Argument Writing
4th Grade ELA

December 18, 2025

Ellen E. Weaver
State Superintendent of Education

Contents

Introduction	3
How to Use a Single-Point Rubric	4
Argumentative Elements for 4 th Grade	6
4 th Grade Opinion Single-Point Rubric.....	8
Element: Topic	9
Element: Opinion.....	12
Element: Reasons.....	14
Element: Facts	16
Element: Organization.....	20
Element: Transitional Words and Phrases	26
Element: Language and Vocabulary	30
Element: Grammar and Conventions	33

Introduction

To better support elementary teachers with assessing writing at the classroom level, the Office of Assessment and Standards, along with ELA content experts, teachers, and literacy leaders from across the state, has created grade-level writing rubrics for each mode of writing in the *2024 SC CCR ELA Standards*. These rubrics will provide teachers with common writing goals for their students and a common tool to evaluate student writing.

Overarching Expectation 6 (ELA.OE.6) in the 2024 ELA Standards notes that students should “create quality work by adhering to an accepted format.” Using rubrics to assess writing provides students with expectations and an accepted format for various types of writing assignments. While rubrics communicate learning goals to students, they also support teachers by providing a tool for quick, targeted feedback and promoting collaboration and conversations between teachers.

The formative rubrics created for South Carolina elementary teachers are single-point rubrics. These rubrics list the criteria for proficiency in the different modes of writing at each grade level and allow teachers to identify where students approach proficiency and exceed proficiency.

Single-point rubrics are formative and instructional because they allow teachers to provide students with feedback for improvement. This differs from the holistic Text-Dependent Writing (TDW) scoring rubrics, which are summative and do not allow explicit feedback for improvement. Another advantage of the single-point rubric for classroom use is that teachers can use only the parts of the rubric they want to focus on at that time. This allows for more targeted feedback and remediation. This also allows for more variety in the format of student writing.

We would like to thank all the ELA content experts, teachers, and literacy leaders who assisted us in the creation of the ELA formative rubrics.

How to Use a Single-Point Rubric

Single-point rubrics allow teachers to focus on one or two areas of weakness instead of focusing on all elements in a student’s written work. Using single-point rubrics also provides teachers with the ability to provide targeted feedback and instruction to each student based on his or her individual needs.

Example: Transitional Words and Phrases

Suggestions	Criteria	Strengths
	Transitional Words and Phrases: The student uses a variety of transitional strategies to link and structure ideas. The transitions support the organization of the written work.	

In the table above, the criterion to be targeted through feedback and revision is “*transitional words and phrases*.” The criterion is outlined in the middle section of the table. The left-hand side of the table provides space for a teacher to provide suggestions for improvement on the targeted criterion—transitional words and phrases. The box on the right-hand side of the table provides space for a teacher to note any strengths in the student’s use of transitional words and phrases. Teachers may choose to leave feedback in both categories or in one category.

Student Sample: Figure 1

I do not like naps. Naps are not fun. Schools should not require naps during the school day. A nap at school could make our day longer. We might lose recess.
--

Figure 1 contains an excerpt of student writing that does not use transitional words and phrases to link ideas.

Example: Providing Suggestions and Noting Strengths

Suggestions	Criteria	Strengths
In the first sentence, you say you do not like naps. In the second sentence, you say why you don't like naps. Is there a word or phrase you can put between these two sentences to show how the two ideas connect?	Transitional Words and Phrases: The student uses a variety of transitional strategies to link and structure ideas. The transitions support the organization of the written work.	

In the sample, the student does not use transitions to connect ideas. In the “suggestions” column of the rubric, the teacher’s feedback focuses only on the first two sentences and asks the student to choose a word or phrase that shows the relationship between the two ideas.

Steps for Using a Single-Point Rubric

This is a suggested list of steps, not a prescribed list.

1. The argumentative writing criteria for “meeting expectations” are provided within the rubric. These criteria are aligned to the grade-level indicators for ELA.C.1.1, ELA.C.4.1, and ELA.C.5.1. The criteria presented in the single-point rubric are clear, specific, and measurable.
2. Familiarize yourself with the rubric and then introduce it to your students. Ensure that students understand the criteria and that you may choose to focus on one criterion or multiple when assessing their writing.
3. As you assess student writing, check the criteria outlined in the rubric. You may also wish to refer to the additional support provided for each criterion.
4. Provide suggestions for improvement and revision in the left-handed column of the rubric. Use the right-hand column to highlight any areas where the student exceeds expectations.
5. Once you have identified an area(s) of weakness for the student, determine appropriate instructional support to help the student improve his or her writing and meet the expectations of that criterion. The document provides suggestions for each criterion in the rubric.
6. After additional instructional support or remediation, allow the student to revise the written work. Some students may have to revise the work several times, focusing on different criteria with each revision.

Argumentative Elements for 4th Grade

The following definitions are based on the definitions provided in the *2024 SC CCR ELA Standards* Glossary of Terms. The Glossary applies to K-12 instruction. The language of the following definitions has been adapted to suit 4th-grade ELA instruction.

Texts

Before a student can write an opinion piece or argument, the student must have a text(s) that provides information on a topic. Students will use this text(s) to learn about the topic before writing and will use the text(s) to provide details and facts.

Topic

The *topic* is what the written response will be about. The student writer should stay on topic from the beginning to the end of the written response. To help the student writer better understand the topic, the teacher should allow him or her time to discuss the texts and topic with other students before the writing process begins. It is the writer's responsibility to show a thorough understanding of the topic

Opinion

In grades K-4, the student writer will provide an *opinion* about the topic. The purpose of the opinion is to allow the student an opportunity to reveal his or her thoughts on a topic.

Reason(s)

A *reason* is a statement or explanation showing why the student thinks what they state in the opinion/claim. Using reasons allows the student writer to support his or her opinion.

Details and Facts

A student uses *details and facts* to support his or her reason(s) and opinion. *Details* provide additional information to support the reason(s). *Facts* can be proven and strengthen a student's reasoning.

Organization

When organizing an argument, the student should present the topic, followed by his or her opinion. In the body of the written response, the student should include at least one reason and at least one detail or fact that supports the reason and opinion. The term *organization* **does not** refer to a specific number of sentences or paragraphs. It refers to how the student organizes his or her argument.

Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitions enter the language of the indicator in the 1st grade. A student writer is expected to progress in the sophistication of the use of transitional words and phrases as he or she advances in grade level. The purpose of transitional words and phrases in opinion writing is to connect or link the topic, opinion, reasons, details, and facts. Transitions help the writer organize the written response.

Language and Vocabulary

In opinion writing, the student writer's choice of words impacts the effectiveness of the opinion piece and holds the reader's attention. The student should use vocabulary that is relevant to the topic. For example, if a student is writing about horses, he or she would refer to a horse's hoof instead of a horse's foot.

Concluding Statement or Idea

The *concluding statement* or *idea* should restate or reiterate the student's opinion statement.

Grammar, Capitalization, Punctuation, and Sentence Structure

For specific information about the grade-level expectations, teachers should refer to ELA.C.4.1.

4th Grade Opinion Single-Point Rubric

Each targeted criterion of 4th-grade argumentative writing can be addressed singularly or in groups, depending on the instructional focus and the individual student’s strengths and weaknesses.

Suggestions	Criteria	Strengths
	Topic: The student presents the topic and carries it throughout the written response	
	Opinion: The student states a clear opinion on the topic.	
	Reasons: The student provides reasons and details that explain why he or she thinks a certain way about the topic.	
	Facts: The student provides facts to support his or her reasons and opinion.	
	Organization: The student organizes the opinion, reasons, details, and facts in a way that is clear to the reader.	
	Transitional Words and Phrases: The student uses a variety of transitional strategies to link and structure ideas. The transitions support the organization of the written work.	
	Language and Vocabulary: The student’s word choice and variety of sentence types and phrases enhance the response and engage the reader.	
	Grammar and Conventions: The student writes grammatically correct sentences to include punctuation and capitalization.	

Element: Topic

Criterion: The student presents a topic and stays on topic throughout the response.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for topic.

A student who is on target will

- introduce the topic at the beginning of the response.
- stay on topic throughout the written work.
- make it clear to the reader that the student understands the topic.

A student who needs support may

- mention the topic and then move to another topic. Sometimes the student may return to the topic at the end of the written response.
- not share enough about the topic for the reader to understand.
- not understand the topic.

Student Sample 1

The students were asked to read a flyer about a garden club and a flyer about a book club. Then, the students were asked to decide which club would be better to join.

I think the garden club is better than the book club. The gardening club is better because you get to go outside. And you can get dirty. It can come in handy later in life because you can learn to grow your own food.

If you don't have a lot of peppers at home you can bring some from the garden. Your mom might like them. And you mom won't have to spend more money at the store because you will bring them home.

A book club makes you read more. I read enough. I don't want to read more books. A garden club needs tools. A rake, a shovel, and a wheelbarrow is what the paper says. It is fun to dig with a shovel. You might find a worm!

These are the reasons I think the garden club is better!

The samples used in this document are excerpts of student writing that have been adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Commentary

Element: Topic or Issue

Student 1

Student 1 presents the topic in the first sentence of the response. In the second paragraph, the student strays from the topic of the garden club to discuss taking home peppers to his or her mom. The student returns to the topic in the last two paragraphs. This student needs support staying on topic.

Suggestions for Student 1

The following suggestions are targeted at the writer of this student sample. These suggestions were written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

- First, make sure the student understands the topic and task. This may be as simple as having the student tell you what he or she is expected to write. It could also mean asking the student to rewrite the task in his or her own words. This student appears to understand the topic and task, but he or she struggles with staying on the topic.
- Writing an outline may help this student better understand how to stay on topic throughout a multi-paragraph response. This will also help with the organization of the written response. If multiple students need support staying on topic, consider modeling an outline for the class and having them write what you write as you progress. This will require a template, meaning you must determine a specific number of paragraphs to start. It is easier to start with fewer paragraphs and progress into more. Or it may be easier to begin with the introduction and conclusion provided and focus only on the body paragraph(s).
- A graphic organizer may help the student better organize his or her thoughts. A sample is included.

Example of a Graphic Organizer

Opinion Statement:

Reason 1:	Reason 2:
Explanation of Reason 1	Explanation of Reason 2
Facts to support the explanation	Facts to support the explanation

Additional reasons may be included, depending on the length of the written work.

Element: Opinion

Criterion: The student states a clear opinion on the topic.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for opinion.

A student who is on target will

- state an opinion that makes clear to the reader how the student thinks or feels about the topic.
- carry his or her opinion through the written response.

A student who needs support may

- not make it clear to the reader how the student thinks or feels about the topic.
- state a fact instead of an opinion.
- explore the topic in a different structure, such as compare and contrast.

Student Sample 1

The class read a short story about animals in a zoo. Then, they read two articles. One article supports zoos, and the other article proposes that we do not have zoos. The students were asked to choose a side on whether we should have zoos and write an opinion paper, using evidence from the text and their own thinking to support their opinions.

We should have zoos because they save animals and they help us learn more about animals. A lot of animals would no longer exist if we didn't have zoos. One animal is the California Condor. Another is the Bellinger River Turtle. Zoos also help us learn about animals and their habitats. This helps people better understand how animals live in the wild and the natural threats they face.

The samples used in this document are excerpts of student writing that have been adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Student Sample 2

The class read a short story about animals in a zoo. Then, they read two articles. One article supports zoos, and the other article proposes that we do not have zoos. The students were asked to choose a side on whether we should have zoos and write an opinion paper, using evidence from the text and their own thinking to support their opinions.

Zoos help animals and protect them from dangers they may face in the wild. The zoo where I live has a lot of monkeys and some giraffes. One of the giraffes had a baby last month. I hope to go see it soon. In 5th grade we get to take a field trip to the zoo. I have heard it is very fun. Some people don't like zoos because they say it is mean to keep the animals in cages.

The samples used in this document are excerpts of student writing that have been adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Commentary

Criterion: Opinion Statement

Student 1

This student clearly states an opinion and provides two reasons that will be explored later in the response.

Student 2

This student presents two sides as to whether we should have zoos. The student also provides one reason for each side of the argument. The student does not state an opinion on what she thinks.

Suggestions for Student 2

The following suggestions are targeted at the writer of the second student sample. These suggestions were written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

- Ensure the student understands the structure of an opinion response. Provide the student with an exemplar and help the student identify and label the opinion, reasons, evidence, and concluding statement or section. Provide the student with simple explanations to include in the annotations. This will provide support for the student as he or she begins developing an opinion response.
- Model writing an opinion statement with the student. Have the student write as you write and explain.
- Help the student add one or more reasons to the opinion statement. The student must first understand that the reasons should be broad because this is what will be explored throughout the body of the paper. Using “because” is an easy way to add reasons to an opinion.

Element: Reasons

Criterion: The student provides a reason(s) that explains why he or she thinks a certain way about the topic.

Below are examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for reasons.

A student who is on target will

- provide at least one reason.
- use the reason to provide a “why” for his or her opinion.

A student who needs support may

- not provide a reason.
- Include a reason, but it does not support his or her opinion.

Student Sample 1

The class read a short story about animals in a zoo. Then, they read two articles. One article supports zoos, and the other article proposes that we do not have zoos. The students were asked to choose a side on whether we should have zoos and write an opinion paper, using evidence from the text and their own thinking to support their opinions.

Zoos help animals and protect them from dangers they may face in the wild. The zoo where I live has a lot of monkeys and some giraffes. One of the giraffes had a baby last month. I hope to go see it soon. In 5th grade we get to take a field trip to the zoo. I have heard it is very fun. Some people don't like zoos because they say it is mean to keep the animals in cages.

The samples used in this document are excerpts of student writing that have been adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Commentary

Element: Reasons

Student 1

Student 1 does not express a clear opinion, which may affect the writer's ability to include reasons that support the opinion. Because this student provides reasons that support both sides of the issue, the student must first choose a side and express an opinion.

Suggestions for Student 1

The following suggestions are targeted at the writer of the student sample. These suggestions were written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

- This student will first need to focus on including an opinion statement. Next, the student will begin by adding one or more reasons. The number of reasons will be determined by the length of the written response, the student's knowledge of the topic, and the number of resources the student is accessing. For example, if the two texts provided with this task are short, there may not be enough text to support more than two reasons.
- Have the student re-read the texts and highlight the facts (evidence) that support the reasons provided in the opinion statement. Help the student select facts (evidence) that only support those reasons.
- A graphic organizer, such as the one shared on page 11, can help the student outline and organize his or her ideas.

Element: Facts

Criterion: The student provides facts to support his or her reasons and opinion.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for facts.

A student who is on target will

- include fact(s) from source material to support his or her reasons.
- include at least one supporting fact for each reason.
- show how each fact supports each reason.

A student who needs support may

- provide a fact(s) that does not clearly connect to the reasons or opinion.
- use the same fact multiple times.
- may show how some facts support some reasons, but not for all.
- may not show how any of the facts support any of the reasons.

Student Sample 1

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

Do you fall asleep in class after lunch? I do. So do some of my friends. I think we should be able to take a nap in school. Taking a nap will help us focus better in the afternoon and it might make some people not be grouchy.

If we could take a nap after lunch, we wouldn't fall asleep during class. Digesting food is hard work for our body and sometimes when our body is digesting, it makes our brains tired. If we took naps after lunch, we would pay better attention because our brains wouldn't be tired. They would be refreshed.

Sometimes when people are tired, they get grouchy. When they get grouchy, they say mean things to friends. Even if they don't mean it. Taking a nap in school would give those people extra rest and they might not say mean things. Just taking a 26 minute nap would help our brains and we would be in a better mood.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Student Sample 2

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

I do not think we should be allowed to take a nap in school. I have a lot of energy and don't get sleepy during the day. We should use that time for playing outside with our friends.

Playing outside with our friends would be better than taking a nap. If I get to play with my friends I will not have as much energy to talk in class. Also, it would give my teacher a rest from teaching us. She could also talk to her friends while we are playing.

I do not think we should be allowed to take a nap in school. We should play outside.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Commentary

Element: Facts

Student 1

Student 1 expresses the opinion that students should be allowed to nap during the school day. The student goes on to provide the reasons, “it will help us focus better” and “it might make people less grouchy”. In the body of the response, the student supports the reasons with facts from the text: “digesting food is hard work for our bodies...makes our brains tired” and “taking a 26-minute nap would help our brains”. The student uses facts from the text to support her reasons.

Student 2

Student 2 provides reasons to support the opinion, but it is not clear if the student uses facts from the text to support the reasons. The connection to energy in the second paragraph may refer to the source material, but it isn't clearly connected for the reader.

Suggestions for Student 2

The following suggestions are targeted at the writer of the second student sample. These suggestions were written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

- The teacher may need to model for the student how to find facts within a text. The teacher may choose to annotate a text and have the student follow along.
- Once the student is able to locate facts within a text, the next step is to select only the facts that support the student's reasons. The teacher may need to help the student determine which facts are relevant to each reason. This can be supported by using a card sort. Present the student with 3-5 reasons. Then, present the student with a set of cards with each containing one fact. Each fact should support one of the

reasons. Ask the student to sort and match the facts with the correct reason. Then, ask the student to explain how each fact supports the assigned reason.

- The student may use a graphic organizer, such as the one included, as a way to outline and organize his or her reasons, explanations, and facts. There is no required number of reasons or facts. The number needed is determined by what is available in the text and the length of the writing assignment.

Example of a Graphic Organizer

Opinion Statement:
Example: I think we should take a nap at school.

<p style="text-align: center;">Reason 1</p> <p>Example: Kids are sleepy after lunch.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reason 2</p> <p>Example: Kids would pay more attention to the teacher.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Additional Reason(s) as needed</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fact A to Support Reason 1</p> <p>Example: Doctors say that after we eat, our bodies focus on digestion. This can make us sleepy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fact A to Support Reason 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fact A to Support Reason 3 (if needed)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Additional details to connect fact and reason.</p> <p>Example: We get sleepy because our blood goes to our stomach to help digest food.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Additional details to connect fact and reason.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Additional details to connect fact and reason.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fact B to Support Reason 2 (if needed)</p> <p>Example: Eating large amounts of bread and sugar may also cause us to get sleepy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fact B to Support Reason 2 (if needed)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fact B to Support Reason 3 (if needed)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Additional details to connect fact and reason</p> <p>Example: Sometimes our school lunch has a lot of bread.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Additional details to connect fact and reason</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Additional details to connect fact and reason</p>

Element: Organization

Criterion: The student organizes the opinion, reasons, details, and facts in a way that is clear to the reader.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate the organization. The organizational focus in 4th grade should continue what started in 3rd grade and begin focusing on organizing the specific elements of opinion, reasons, details, and facts. Transitions play an essential role in organizing writing.

A student who is on target will

- include an introduction.
- introduce the topic in the introduction.
- state his or her opinion in the introduction.
- include a body paragraph(s).
- support his or her opinion with reasons and details.
- support the reasons and details with facts from the source material.
- restate or rephrase his or her opinion in the conclusion.

A student who needs support may

- not provide an introduction.
- not introduce the topic in the introduction.
- not state his or her opinion in the introduction.
- not support his or her opinion with reasons and details in a way that helps the reader understand the relationship between the elements.
- not support the reasons and details with facts from the source material.
- not include a body paragraph(s).
- not provide a concluding statement.
- state a different opinion in the concluding section of the response.
- neglect to restate the opinion in the concluding section of the response.

Organization is not based on a required number of paragraphs or sentences within a paragraph. Transitional words and phrases play an important part in the structure and organization of a written work.

Student Sample 1

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

Do you get sleepy in class? I do. All students should get to take a nap in class **after lunch**. **After lunch**, our bodies are hard at work digesting food, **which can** make us sleepy. **Being sleepy** in class can cause us to miss important information. **Allowing students** to take a nap after lunch will improve their grades.

“**Digesting food** moves the blood from our brains to our stomachs.” **When my** body is digesting food my eyelids want to close for a while. **If we could** take a nap I could rest my eyelids and recharge my brain. **Then I can** stay awake for reading centers. This will help me get good grades.

Taking a nap after lunch will let us rest our eyelids and our brains **while our body digests** food. **If we can** rest our eyes, **then we can** be more alert in class **and** get better grades.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Student Sample 2

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

I get sleepy in class. I get super sleepy after lunch. **Sometimes** I put my head on my desk **and** close my eyes. Mrs. Jones taps me on the shoulder to wake me up.

We should get to take a nap in class. The passage says, “**Napping recharges your brain**.” **I** want to recharge my brain so I can stay awake for math. Math is boring and it makes me sleepy.

If I could take a nap in class **I would be able to** stay awake for math. Math would still be boring but my brain would be recharged.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Commentary

Element: Organization

Student 1

Student 1 states an opinion in the introduction. Highlighted in yellow:

- Paragraph 1, “All students should get to take a nap in class after lunch.”

The student’s reasons are highlighted in green:

- Paragraph 1, “...our bodies are hard at work digesting food, which can make us sleepy.”
- Paragraph 1, “Being sleepy in class can cause us to miss important information.”

The student uses a fact to support the reasons. Highlighted in blue is:

- Paragraph 2, “Digesting food moves the blood from our brains to our stomachs.”

The student then goes on to provide details (explanation). The reasons and details support the student’s opinion. The fact from the text supports the reasons and details. The reader can see the relationship between each of these parts. In pink:

- Paragraph 2, “When my body is digesting food my eyelids want to close for a while. If we could take a nap I could rest my eyelids and recharge my brain. Then I can stay awake for reading centers. This will help me get good grades.”
- Paragraph 3, “...rest our eyelids and brains while our body digests food.”
- Paragraph 3, “If we can rest our eyes, then we can be more alert in class and get better grades.”

In bold are the transitions that the student uses to show relationships, sequence events, and link together ideas.

- “after lunch”
- “after lunch... which can”
- “being sleepy”
- “allowing students”
- “when my”
- “If we could”
- “Then I can”
- “Taking a nap after lunch”
- “While our body digests”
- “If we can... then we can... and...”

Student 2

Student 2 does not introduce the topic in the introduction. This is confusing to the reader. Is the response about falling asleep in class after lunch? The reader does not know until the second paragraph when the student reveals the topic while stating her opinion about naps. The student's opinion is highlighted in yellow:

- Paragraph 2, "We should get to take a nap in class."

The fact from the source text is highlighted in blue:

- Paragraph 2, The passage says, "Napping recharges your brain."

The reasons and details (explanation) are highlighted in pink. The explanation is related to the text, but the statement, "math is boring..." starts to veer off topic. In pink:

- Paragraph 2, "I want to recharge my brain so I can stay awake for math. Math is boring and it makes me sleepy."

The student uses very few transitions to connect ideas or show relationships. The student includes:

- Paragraph 1, "Sometimes...and"
- Paragraph 3, "If I could... I would be able to"

In the conclusion, the student does not restate his or her opinion and leaves the reader to infer that the student believes schools should be allowed to take a nap. Again, the student provides additional details about math being boring, but doesn't fully connect this to his or her opinion.

Suggestions for Student 2

The following suggestions are targeted at the writer of the second student sample. These suggestions were written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

- Use mentor texts to show the student what an effective concluding statement or section looks like. Discuss the parts and why they are effective. Be sure to include a mentor text that "looks like" what you want your students to write. If you are asking the student to write a three-paragraph opinion piece, then use a three-paragraph opinion piece as one of your mentor texts.
- Help the student create a graphic organizer that includes an opinion, reason(s), and details. There is no set number of reasons or details. These are determined by the length of the written piece and the student's knowledge of the topic. Although the single-point rubric presents the order of opinion, reasons, and details/facts, this is not a required order. A sample graphic organizer is included.

Example of a Graphic Organizer

Opinion: We should let students nap after lunch.

Reason: It will improve their grades	Reason:	Reason:
Fact: “Digesting food moves the blood from our brains to our stomachs.”	Fact:	Fact:
Detail(s): When my body is digesting food my eyelids close Rest my eyelids and recharge my brain Then I can stay away for reading centers This will help me get good grades.	Detail(s):	Detail(s):

Allowing students to use sentence fragments in the graphic organizer will help reduce the likelihood of plagiarizing sentences from the text.

- Next, help the student organize her or her writing by using the sentences from the outline. Help the student add transitional words and phrases where needed. This can be done by providing a list to choose from. The transitional words and phrases in the provided list must be ones that will fit within one of the sentences. Do not just provide a random list of transitions. If you refer to the “transitions” criterion, it discusses the importance of students' understanding of how transitions work. A sample is included.

Word Bank

After then we can allowing then if we could can cause if we can
When according to the article this will

Do you get sleepy in class? I do. All students should get to take a nap in class _____ lunch. After lunch, our bodies are hard at work digesting food, which can make us sleepy. Being sleepy in class _____ us to miss important information. _____ students to take a nap after lunch will improve their grades.

_____, “digesting food moves the blood from our brains to our stomachs.” _____ my body is digesting food my eyelids want to close for a while. _____ take a nap I could rest my eyelids and recharge my brain. _____ I can stay awake for reading centers. _____ help me get good grades.

Taking a nap after lunch will let us rest our eyelids and brains while our body digests food. _____ rest our eyes, _____ be more alert in class and get better grades.

Element: Transitional Words and Phrases

Criterion: The student uses a variety of transitional strategies to link and structure ideas. The transitions support the organization of the written work.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for *transitional words and phrases*. Students should use transitions to link ideas within sentences and paragraphs to link one paragraph to the next.

A student who is on target will

- use one or more transitional words and phrases.
- use a transitional word or phrase to connect the reason to the opinion.
- use a transitional word or phrase to connect the detail to the reason.
- use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas.
- use transitional words and phrases to connect paragraphs.

A student who needs support may

- use the same transitional word or phrase multiple times.
- use a transition that doesn't fit the writing.
- not use transitions.

Student Sample 1

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

Sometimes after lunch I get sleepy. When this happens, I try really hard to listen to my teacher and keep my eyes open. But sometimes that doesn't work and I end up with my head bobbing around. This wouldn't happen if we were allowed to take a nap in school.

Digesting food is hard work for our body and I have reading after lunch. Reading is hard on my body too. What happens is my body is working so hard digesting my food that my body can't focus on reading. If we could take a nap in school my body could do its work to digest my food while I am sleeping. Then, I will be ready to read.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Student Sample 2

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

I do not like naps. Naps are not fun. Schools should not require naps during the school day.

A nap at school could make our day longer. We might lose recess.

Not all kids would take a nap. Some kids would talk or move around and get in trouble. This would be hard work for the teacher.

It would be more fun if we went outside. We could play. Kids who don't like to play can sit on the benches and read. This is better than taking a nap.

We should not have to take a nap at school.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Commentary

Elements: Organization and Transitional Strategies

Student 1

Student 1 uses a variety of transitions to show relationships between ideas within each paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph. Highlighted in yellow:

- “sometimes”
- “when this happens”
- “and”
- “but sometimes”
- “and”
- “if”
- “Then”

Student 2

Student 2 uses very few transitional strategies in the written response. This makes the writing seem very choppy. By using more transitional words and phrases, the student could connect ideas and make the response easier to read.

Suggestions for Student 2

The following suggestions are targeted at the writer of the second student sample. These suggestions were written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

- Read short texts with the student and point out the transitions as they are used. Ask the student how the transitions affect the flow of the story or of the ideas.
- Create a set of cards with each card containing a sentence with a blank for the missing transitional word or phrase. Create another set of cards, each containing a transition that will fit with one of the sentences. Demonstrate to the student the process of selecting the correct transitional word or phrase for each sentence. Have the student write each sentence, circle the transition, and then write why the selected transition works in each sentence. If using this with the whole class, divide students into small groups. Provide each group with two sets of cards. The transitions should be the same as the ones used earlier. Allow the students to use their notes as a resource. As the students match each transition to its correct sentence, they should explain why they selected that transition and how it works within the sentence.
- Provide a short exemplar text to the student. Model marking the different transitional words and phrases within the text. Have the student mark the text with you. Provide an explanation for each transition and how it works in that part of the text. Ask the student to write down your explanations. This can become a resource for him or her later.
- Provide the student with a short text that is missing transitions. Place a blank in the spot where each transition should be placed. Provide a transitional word bank. A sample is included below.
- Next, try the same process using a draft of the student's own work. A sample is included.

Example Strategy

Word Bank					
Also	it could	plus	because	if we take	because
as previously stated		plus			

I do not like naps _____ naps are not fun. Schools should not require naps during the school day. _____ a nap at school, _____ make our day longer. We might _____ lose recess. _____, not all kids would take a nap. Some kids would talk or move around and get in trouble. This would be hard work for the teacher.

It would be more fun if we went outside _____ we could play. _____ kids who don't like to play can sit on the benches and read. This is better than taking a nap. _____, we should not have to take a nap at school.

Element: Language and Vocabulary

Criterion: The student’s word choice and variety of sentence types and phrases enhance the response and engage the reader.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for *language and voice*. Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate the writing for language and vocabulary. Students in 4th grade should use words that are on topic and that enhance the response. Additionally, 4th-grade students should use a variety of sentence types in their writing to create variety, add interest, and engage the reader. A student’s use of language and sentence variety impacts his or her style and voice.

A student who is on target will

- use words specific to the topic and purpose.
- use words to aid the reader’s understanding.
- use words to enhance the response.
- use words to engage the reader.
- use a variety of sentence types and phrases to enhance the reader’s understanding of the topic.
- use a variety of sentence types and phrases to engage the reader.

A student who needs support may

- use vague words, leaving the reader to determine what it “could mean”.
- use words that are unrelated to the topic and detract from the reader’s understanding.
- begin most sentences with the same word or phrase.
- write using only one type of sentence (all simple sentences, for example).
- write using sentences that are all the same length.
- not use phrases.

Student Sample 1

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

Do you fall asleep in class after lunch? I do. So do some of my friends. All elementary schools should allow naptime during school. Taking a nap will help us focus better in the afternoon and it might make some people not be so grouchy.

If we could take a nap after lunch, we wouldn't fall asleep during class. Digesting food is hard work for our body and sometimes when our body is digesting, it makes our brains tired. If we took naps after lunch, we would pay better attention because our brains wouldn't be tired. They would be refreshed.

Sometimes when people are tired, they get grouchy. When they get grouchy, they say mean things to friends. Even if they don't mean it. Taking a nap in school would give those people extra rest and they might not say mean things. Just taking a 25 minute nap would help our brains and we would be in a better mood.

If we were allowed to take naps in school we would not fall asleep in class after lunch. We also would not get grouchy and say mean things to each other.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Student Sample 2

After reading a text about the benefits of napping, students were asked if all elementary students should nap during the school day. Students were told to choose one side and write an argument supporting that side.

I read about how some schools want kids to take a nap at school. Why would kids want to do that? We have to sit all day now. I don't want to take a nap. I want to go play outside with my friends. Schools should not make us take a nap.

Taking a nap is boring. Going outside to play is not. The passage said that a 25 minute nap would boost our brain function. Playing outside would boost my brain function. I bet it would boost my friends brains too.

I don't want to take a nap at school. I am too old for that. Lets go play outside instead.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Considerations

Element: Language and Vocabulary

Student 1

Student 1 uses a variety of sentence types: simple sentences, compound sentences, etc. The student also uses a question to engage the reader. Some of the sentences are short and some are longer. This makes the paper flow better for the reader. The student uses vocabulary that fits the topic. The use of the word “refreshed” is a good contradiction to the word “tired”. This helps illustrate the author’s argument that taking a nap will help students focus more and prevent grouchiness.

Student 2

Student 2 needs support using vocabulary that enhances the response. In the first sentence, the student states, “I read about how some schools want kids...” This student needs support choosing and using more specific words. Where did the student read this information? Is there a more precise way to describe the schools instead of ‘some schools’? Is the word “kids” appropriate for this type of writing? Using first person in opinion writing is appropriate; however, could the student change some of his or her sentences that begin with “I”? What effect would this have on the readability of the response?

Suggestions for Student 2

The following suggestion is targeted at the writer of the second student sample. This suggestion was written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

- Reading and writing are connected. Reading helps a student develop his or her vocabulary. The student should have the opportunity to read and discuss the source material.
- Consider using the Frayer Model with this student to help extend their word knowledge.
- Creating Semantic Maps will allow the student to build connections between ideas and words related to a topic.

Element: Grammar and Conventions

Criterion: The student writes grammatically correct sentences to include punctuation and capitalization.

As appropriate to the written work, a student who is on target will

- write grammatically correct sentences.
- use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.
- use and correctly place a dependent clause.
- use and correctly place an appositive phrase(s).
- use action verbs.
- use linking verbs.
- use helping verbs.
- use and maintain the correct verb tense.
- use correct subject-verb agreement.
- use the correct type of pronoun as appropriate.
- capitalize proper nouns and adjectives, and the pronoun I.
- use and place prepositions and prepositional phrases.
- use, place, and order adjectives*.
- use and place adverbs.
- distinguish between and use frequently confused words, such as “to” and “too”.
- capitalize the appropriate words in titles.
- use correct ending punctuation.
- use and place commas.

ELA.4.C.4.1 asks students to “order adjectives within sentences according to conventional patterns.” This is addressed and illustrated in the student sample.

A student who needs support may

- write one or more sentence fragments.
- write one or more run-on sentences.
- incorrectly place or punctuate a dependent clause or an appositive phrase.
- use the wrong verb tense.
- switch verb tenses unnecessarily.
- use incorrect subject-verb agreement one or more times.
- use the wrong type of pronoun (relative, indefinite, possessive, or demonstrative).
- not correctly capitalize one or more words.
- not correctly use or place one or more adjectives.
- not correctly use or place one or more adverbs.
- incorrectly place a preposition phrase.
- misuse words such as “to” and “too”.
- misuse, misplace, or not use punctuation marks.

Student Sample 1

Students were asked to read two texts about the pros and cons of moving to a four-day school week. Students were asked to choose a side and write an argumentative response.

Have you ever wasted time at school? I know I have. At my school, we wasted a lot of time. Some days we have to climb up the big, old, green bleachers to watch a talent show or listen to a speaker. This is a waste of my time. I bet we waste enough time in one week to equal a full day of school. Our school should go to a four day school week. This would give us an extra day in the weekend and it could save the school money on the electric bill.

These are excerpts of student work samples adapted for use in this document. Sections of the responses have been selected based on the criterion that is being highlighted. Spelling errors have been corrected.

Commentary

Element: Grammar and Conventions

The more practice students have working with writing and correcting sentences for correct grammar and conventions, the more likely students are to store these fundamental skills in their long-term memories. Students also need practice retrieving these skills from their long-term memories and applying them in different types of writing.

- In the third sentence, the student uses a prepositional phrase at the beginning of the sentence. The phrase is correctly written because it begins with the preposition “at” and ends with the object “school”. Placing it at the beginning of the sentence requires the use of a comma after it. The student has correctly placed this comma. Using a prepositional phrase at the beginning of the sentence adds variety to the student’s writing and enhances the student’s style.
- In the fourth sentence, the student writes, “Some days we have to climb up the big, old, green bleachers...” This sentence includes a list of adjectives that describe the bleachers. They are big bleachers. They are old bleachers, and they are green bleachers.
- What would happen to this sentence if we placed these adjectives in a different order? “Some days we have to climb up the green, old, big bleachers...” Does changing the order of the adjectives impact the sentence?
- Let’s see what happens when we remove one adjective and switch the order: “Some days we have to climb up the green big bleachers...” “Some days we have to climb up the green old bleachers...” Does “it sound right” when we place “green” ahead of “big”? No. There is a reason for this. While there is no hard and fast grammatical rule for listing adjectives, there is a general order. In this case, we see size (big), age (old), and color (green). We also learned that putting those in a different order changes how fluid the sentence is. One rule of thumb is the Royal Order of Adjectives, which is a standard sequence of placing adjectives that describe the same noun.