



**ELA**  
**Grades 6 through 8**

**Test Data  
Review Report  
2023**

## Introduction

On October 23, 2023, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) Office of Assessment and Standards (OAS) convened a panel of educators to review item data from the SC READY ELA grades 6-8 assessments. The panel discussed and analyzed items from the 2023 SC READY assessments of the *2015 SCCCR ELA Standards*, including information about how students performed on each item. The panel recognizes the hard work of SC educators and offers these relevant and useful suggestions for improving instruction as an addendum to those from previous years.

The panel offered suggestions to impact instruction for the standard indicators listed below. Please be reminded that this is not an inclusive list of all the assessed indicators, but consideration for the indicators where students appear to be having difficulty. To streamline information and avoid redundancy, this report focuses on indicators identified by this year's panel as areas of particular concern. Data review reports for previous years are available at the [SCDE's website](#). Teachers are encouraged to review the 2022 Data Review Report, as it contains specific information that remains relevant for improving instruction.

## Reading Literary and Informational Text

The committee recommends that students engage in purposeful annotation of literary and informational texts as a close reading strategy. While this strategy can be applied to all the reading standards, the committee chose to focus on indicators RL.5.1, RI.5.1, RL.6.1, RI.6.1, RL.9.2, and RI.8.1 based on the item-level data from grades 6-8.

When annotating texts at the middle-school level, students must engage in purposeful annotations according to the task. Purposeful annotations support inferencing and analysis of the text, help students formulate thoughts and questions about the text, help students track key ideas and details within the text, and provide students with a deeper understanding of the text. Teachers may choose to use students' annotations as formative assessments to identify areas of re-teaching or determine scaffolding needs.

Strategy	Suggestions
Create Symbols	<p>Before teaching students how to annotate text, create a series of symbols for students to use while annotating. There are many symbols from which to choose. A few ideas to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Circle key words or phrases.</li><li>• Underline key ideas and details.</li><li>• Use an exclamation point to identify important information.</li><li>• Use an "I" to label a student's inference.</li><li>• Use an "N" to indicate new information to the student.</li></ul> <p>Students should always have access to the annotation symbols. <b><i>The learning target is not to memorize the</i></b></p>

Strategy	Suggestions
Create Symbols (cont.)	<b>symbols.</b> It is to apply the symbols as part of close reading. This may mean anchor charts and a one-pager for student reference.
Model	Model how to annotate text. This should first happen with small chunks of text. Choose to focus on one or two annotation strategies at a time. While modeling the annotations, “think aloud” through the process to help students better understand the purpose of each annotation.
Purpose	Annotations must be purposefully done, and students must understand the purpose before reading the text. Depending on the purpose of the annotations, students may not need to use all annotation symbols each time they read a text. For example, if the purpose of the first reading of a text is to examine an author’s word choice, students may only need to circle key words and then answer questions such as, <i>“How does the author’s choice of words impact the meaning of this section of text?”</i>
Display Work	Display a text in various stages of purposeful annotation. This allows students to see what is expected for each type of purpose.

## Writing

The committee noted that revising writing is a weakness in grades 6-8 and made suggestions to help middle school teachers support revision in the classroom. One particular concern voiced by the committee is that revising and editing be taught as separate steps in the writing process. The revision indicators are 6.W.1.1e, 7.W.1.1f, 8.W.1.1f, 6.W.2.1g, 7.W.2.1g, 8.W.2.1g, 6.W.3.1f, 7.W.3.1f, and 8.W.3.1f.

## Modeling Revision

Revision strategies for students in grades 6-8 should center on one or two skills at a time. This will allow students to develop those skills and not be overwhelmed by a multitude of suggestions. Before focusing on actual student writing, provide students with a draft of a text and model the skills of revision for that text. Allowing students to ask clarifying questions throughout the process allows for the teacher to determine which students may need scaffolding support for specific revision skills. Areas of focus could include:

- Word Choice: Ask students to identify 2-3 powerful words in the text. (Literary or Informational)

- Phrases: Ask students to identify 2-3 powerful phrases in the text. (Literary or Informational)
- Sentences: Ask students to identify 2-3 powerful sentences in the text. (Literary or Informational)
- Reflection: Ask students to identify an author's use of reflection. (Literary)
- Flashback: Ask students to identify an author's use of flashback. (Literary)
- Character details: Ask students to identify specific details about a character. (Literary)
- Claim: Ask students to identify a claim. (Informational)
- Structure: Ask students to note how the text is structured. (Informational)
- Text features: Ask students to note 1-3 text features. (Informational)
- Figurative Language: ask students to find 1-2 examples of figurative language. (Literary or Informational)

Once students have completed the assigned focus area(s), the teacher could ask questions such as:

- Word Choice: *What makes this word powerful? Why did the author choose this word? If the author had used the word (teacher provides another word of similar meaning), how would the text be different?*
- Reflection: *How does the reflection by the author or narrator impact the text? Why did the author include it? How would the text be different without it?*
- Structure: *How does the author's choice of (name the structure) in this selection impact how you read the text? How would the text be different if the author had used (name a different structure)?*

These questions can be completed as a whole class or in small groups. The use of questions such as these allows the teacher to determine which students need support with elements such as structure and figurative language.

## One Text, Many Revisions

For students to understand how revision works, they must see a text that has undergone multiple revisions. The teacher may want to write a short piece of text and show 2-3 revisions based on different areas of focus, plus the final version. For students to understand *why* the revisions were necessary and *how* the revisions were applied, the text should be annotated. This can be done as a class activity with the teacher modeling the revisions and the teacher thinking aloud. The work can also be on display in the classroom for students to use as a reference.

## Revision Checklist

Before students begin revising their writing, the teacher should provide students with a revision checklist. This checklist can be displayed in the room as an anchor chart. Students should also have access to a copy. Remember, ***the learning goal is not to memorize the checklist*** but to apply it to their writing. Below are a few questions teachers can consider for informational or narrative writing.

### Informational

- Does the paragraph have a topic sentence?
- Does the topic sentence tell the reader what the paragraph is about?
- Does the paragraph include supporting reasons, evidence, and examples?
- Do the reasons, evidence, and examples support the topic sentence?

### Narrative

- Are the events sequenced in a logical order?
- What details are provided about the setting?
- What details are provided about the character(s)?

The checklist can be used by students with their own writing or can be used as part of the peer review process. There are many revision checklists online. Before selecting one, make sure that the language used in the checklist matches the language of our SC ELA Standards. For example, our standards use the term “counterclaim” instead of “rebuttal.”

## Conferencing

When conferencing with a student about the student’s writing, consider asking the student to read the text aloud. As the student is reading, note any places where the student stumbles, gets stuck, or seems confused. These should be the first areas of focus for revision. Consider asking questions such as:

- *Why did you pause when you read this part?*
- *What about this part is unclear?*
- *What are you trying to say in this part?*
- *What did you actually say?*
- *How can you make that clearer for the reader?*

Once the student revises the work after the first conference, schedule a second conference to focus on elements such as word choice, vocabulary, transitions, sentence variety, and paragraph structure, etc.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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### **FAQ: Which ELA standards will be assessed on the SC READY ELA tests in 2023-24?**

**Answer:** The 2015 SCCCR ELA Standards will be assessed in 2023-24. The 2023 SC CCR ELA Standards will be assessed operationally in 2024-25.

**FAQ: Why are we having a stand-alone field test this spring?**

**Answer:** This spring, students in grades 3-8 and English 2 will take a stand-alone field test for the upcoming Text-Dependent Writing (TDW) Item. This item will replace the current TDA item beginning in 2024-25. For this change to happen, the TDW must first be field tested. To learn more, read the [Transitioning from TDA to TDW Memo](#).

**FAQ: How do we know when the TDW will be field tested?**

**Answer:** Please reach out to your School Testing Coordinator or your District Testing Coordinator for this information. Each district set its field test date based on its SC READY testing window. If you want to learn more about the testing window, read the [2023-24 Assessment Schedule](#).

**FAQ: When will the TDW rubrics be released?**

**Answer:** There are ongoing regional professional development opportunities for TDW happening throughout the state through February 2024. The TDW rubrics will be released on the [Assessment Quick Links for Teachers](#) page in late February. There will also be a short, explanatory video provided with the rubrics that give an overview of the new item. More professional development for TDW and the rubrics will be offered in the 2024-25 school year.

**FAQ: When will we receive scored sample TDW responses?**

**Answer:** Since the TDW item has not yet been administered, there are no student responses to release. The field test will take place in spring 2024. We will gather committees of teachers to participate in rangefinding in July 2024. The teachers on these committees will determine the score points for student TDW responses. Because this is a lengthy process, we do not have an exact date for the release of scored student TDW responses. Teachers can apply to join assessment committees at the [Assessment Quick Links for Teachers](#) page.

**FAQ: When will other assessment resources be released for the 2023 SC CCR ELA Standards?**

**Answer:** We will begin releasing some resources in late spring 2024. This is to avoid confusion around which standards are being assessed this school year. New resources will be released on the [Assessment Quick Links for Teachers](#) page.