Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium:

English Language Arts
Item and Task Specifications

Developed by Measured Progress/ETS Collaborative
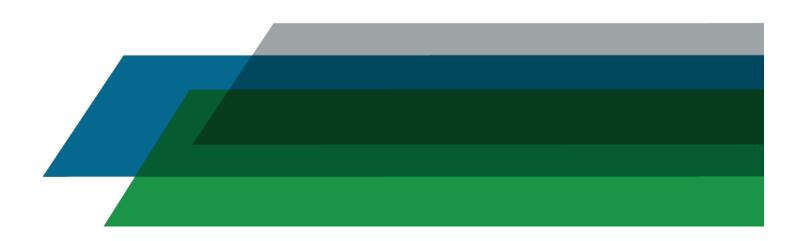April 13, 2012

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Introduction

Using this document

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium's work on the *English Language Arts (ELA) Item and Task Specifications* will provide item writers with parameters for selected-response (SR) items, constructed-response (CR) items, and performance tasks (PT). The general guidelines for technology enhanced (TE) items/tasks will appear in a separate document. This document outlines general guidelines of the format, content, and rigor for items developed for the Smarter Balanced summative assessments. Item writers should become familiar with the ELA Smarter Balanced bridge document entitled *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA.* This document provides a foundation that item writers need in order to create the kinds of items that Smarter Balanced states desire for their assessments.

Purpose of the English Language Arts Item and Task Specifications

The next generation assessment program envisioned by the Consortium will use the many recent advances in assessment to determine whether students of the Smarter Balanced states are making progress toward the goal of leaving high school prepared for postsecondary success in college or careers. With that goal in mind, the Smarter Balanced summative assessment requires rigorous items based on the claims and targets and the principles of Evidence-Centered Design (EDC) as set forth in the *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA.*

The specifications outlined in this document will be precise and accessible so that future item/task writers will understand the process of item writing as well as make the connections to ECD and recognize the needs of all students at the outset of that process. The type of item/task written is dependent on the target and the level of complexity demanded by that target. The items must be written so that the response shows evidence that the student has the skills and knowledge to perform that item/task. Required levels of complexity are shown in that item tables as well as in the content specifications for each target.

Smarter Balanced English Language Arts Item and Task Specifications

General Item/Task Considerations

The Consortium is committed to using evidence-centered design (ECD) in the development of an assessment system. As a part of this design, Smarter Balanced established four "claims" regarding what students should know and be able to do to demonstrate readiness for college and career in the domain of ELA and literacy. The four claims are

Claim #1 – Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.

Claim #2 – Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences.

Claim #3 – Students can employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences.

Claim #4 – Students can engage in research/inquiry to investigate topics, and to analyze, integrate, and present information.

The principles of ECD require that each of these claims be accompanied by statements about the kinds of evidence that would be sufficient to support the claims. These evidence statements are articulated as "assessment targets."

The initial work of using ECD to both establish the claims and accompanying targets for ELA has been completed by the Consortium and is articulated in the document, *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA*. This document is a necessary complement to these test items and performance task specifications and should be used together to fully understand how to write items and tasks needed to provide the evidence in support of these claims and targets.

The Smarter Balanced assessment system strategically uses a variety of item types to assess the claims and targets as they are presented in the *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA.* These specifications emphasize complex thinking skills: analysis, synthesis, and critical thinking. Selected-response (SR) items, constructed-response (CR) items, performance tasks (PT), and technology enhanced (TE) items/tasks can provide evidence that a student has achieved the skills and knowledge necessary to leave high school prepared for success in college or career.

TEs are desirable when they can provide evidence for ELA practices that could not be as reliably obtained from SR and CR items. Additionally, components of certain extended-response items and performance tasks may employ TE tools as part of the task. An expressed desire on the part of the consortium is that the use of TE items in the assessments will ultimately encourage classroom use of technology (i.e., computers) as part of classroom instruction. Several TE template specifications have been designed for use in the ELA domain, including reordering text, selecting and changing text, selecting text, and selecting from drop-down menus. All 25 suggested TE template specifications could be used to create items for the ELA domain. Each template has a wide variety of options for changes in the presentation of the material, adding to the capability for creating many rich and interesting types of items from the template specifications.

All SR/CR items and PT tasks should integrate knowledge and skills. The SR and CR items should be focused primarily on one assessment target. The PT, however, should be written to multiple claims

and targets. ELA items/tasks focus on reading, writing, speaking and listening, and research claims. They measure capacities such as depth of understanding, interpretive and analytical ability, basic recall, synthesis, and research. All item types should represent content that is relevant and meaningful to students and should not require prior knowledge to understand and use the text.

General Item/Task Specification Table

Item Specification Tables will illustrate the metadata for each target. Item writers will use the table to ascertain the characteristics for items written to that particular target. The target table below explains the content of each cell in the table.

Claim: This is the statement of the claim from the ELA Content Specifications.	
Assessment Target(s): This cell has the target from the Content Specifications. In item specification tables for PTs this cell may include multiple targets.	
Secondary Target(s): Some Claim 1 targets have a secondary target in PT. In item specification tables for performance tasks, this cell says Additional Possible Claims and Targets and includes any of the claims and targets that could be assessed in the PT. These claims and targets are eligible to be measured by scorable evidence.	

Standards:	**Standards from the CCSS**
DOK Target(s):	Depth of Knowledge level for this target or targets This is the level of complexity the item is to be written to and corresponds to the matrix drawn from both Bloom's (revised) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* and Webb's *Depth-of-Knowledge Levels* represented in figure 1 on page 00 of this document.
Evidence Required:	Explains what evidence is required to know that students have mastered the skill and knowledge of the target or targets. This cell explains *how* any item written for this target proves that the student has the knowledge and skills to perform the demands of the target(s) and claim(s).
Allowable Item Types*:	SR, TE, CR, or PT
Task Models:	*Task models will* identify DOK levels for models of potential items. There should be models for every level of complexity listed in the DOK cell and a variety of approaches for all allowable item types. The models are **some** of the ways an item could be written to a specific target and should not be considered an exhaustive list.
Key Nontargeted Constructs:	This cell identifies skills and knowledge the student needs in order to respond but not scored for the Target.
Allowable Stimulus Materials:	States which stimuli are allowed for the target, e.g., literary text or informational text.
Allowable Disciplinary Vocabulary:	This cell gives specific vocabulary from ELA or Mathematics that students are expected to know at this grade level or the one before, depending on the Target(s).
Allowable Tools:	This cell identifies tools students may use in performing the item/task.
Target-Specific Attributes:	This cell contains stimulus text that should be on grade level for reading targets and one grade below for other targets.

Accessibility Concerns:	This cell identifies possible concerns for students with disabilities or those with accessibility issues.
Sample Items:	Hot links will provide access to sample items for this target.
Scoring Information:	This cell contains information about how items written to the specific target will be scored, e.g., rubrics: 2- and 3-point item-specific rubrics for reading targets.

SR = selected-response item; CR = constructed-response item; TE = technology-enhanced item;

PT = performance task

General Item/Task Development Guidelines

The following list provides general guidelines to follow when developing all item types:

Item Development Guidelines for all Selected Response and Constructed Response Items and Performance Tasks
• Each SR and CR item should be written to focus primarily on one assessment target. Secondary targets are acceptable for some Claim 1 targets and should be listed in the item forms.   • Each PT should be written to multiple claims and targets.   • Items/tasks should be clearly written to elicit the desired evidence of a student's knowledge, skills, and abilities.   • Items/tasks should avoid measurement of a student's feelings or values.   • Items/tasks should not provide an advantage or disadvantage to a particular group of students. Items should not exhibit or reflect disrespect to any segment of the population in regard to age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, or geographic region.   • Universal design principles must be followed. Universal design, as applied to assessments, is a concept that allows the widest possible range of students to participate in assessments and may even reduce the need for accommodations and alternative assessments by expanding access to the tests themselves.   • All items/tasks must be coded to the Smarter Balanced cognitive levels as indicated on page 68 of this document.   • Vocabulary items should follow the Common Core State Standards 3-tier words and academic vocabulary as described on pages 69-70 of this document.

Selected-Response Items

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy require a focus on students gathering evidence, knowledge, and insight from what they read. As a result, most selected-response (SR) items will relate to a stimulus (e.g., a reading passage or audio/visual stimulus). They include a stem, followed by three or more options from which a student is directed to choose one or several correct options. Some items may be discrete, (i.e., stand-alone such as sentence combining items), but most require the student to read a stimulus text. See the target tables on pages 00-00 in this document, the *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA*, and the *Smarter Balanced Stimulus Specifications for ELA* documents for guidance.

Specific Guidelines for Developing SR Items

The Guidelines for Developing SR Items are to be used along with the General Item Development Guidelines that appear on page 7. The following list provides specific guidelines for developing the stems in SR items:

Guidelines for Developing Stems in SR Items
• Stems should present a complete problem so that students know what to do before looking at the options; students should not need to read all options before knowing what is expected.
• Grades 3–5 stems should be in the form of a question. An open stem, however, may be used if doing so will reduce wordiness and repetition.
• Grades 6–11 permit open-ended stems, and there should be a variety of stem types. The decision for choosing open or closed stems should be based on ease of reading and clarity.

The following list provides specific guidelines for developing the options in SR Items:

Guidelines for Developing Options in SR Items
• All options should be plausible and there must be a correct or best answer.
• All options, including the correct response, should be similar in length and syntax. Students should not be able to rule out a wrong answer or identify a correct response solely because it looks or sounds different from the other options.
• All options should be arranged according to a logical order (e.g., vocabulary words, details, or quotations from the passage should follow the order used in the text).
• All options must be followed by distractor analyses which help item writers think through students' common misunderstandings of a concept.

Claims to be measured in SR items:

ELA SR items are written to Claims 1-4. Most items are written to a single target with a few exceptions. In Claim 1 targets 4, 5, 6, and 7 have a secondary target of target 1 and targets 11, 12, 13, and 14 have the secondary target of target 8.

Scoring SRs:

Typically, SR items contribute one point to the overall score and are scored with answer keys. However, SR items may have multiple correct answers and contribute more than one point. These items are scored using an algorithm to address a different combination of correct or incorrect responses.

Maximum time requirement per ELA/SR items:

Grades 3: 1 – 3 minutes per item

Grades 4-11: 1 – 2 minutes per item

Item Metadata for Selected Response Items

When an item writer writes an item, the item is written in an Item Specification Form, which contains metadata specific to the item being written. Here is an example of an Item Specification Form for SR items. Note the similarities to the Item Table. Information from the Table should be used in the Form. There are also spaces in the form for the item parts described above.

Sample Item ID:	ELA.Gr.SR.ClaimX.XXXXX.TargetX.XXX e.g., ELA08.SR.2.04.999
Grade/Model:	Grade tested/Model number of the task model from the item specification table
Claim:	This is the statement of the claim from the Content Specifications.
Assessment Target:	This cell has the target from the Content Specifications.
Secondary Target(s):	If the target requires a secondary target from the Content Specifications, the secondary target goes in this cell.
Standard(s):	Standards from the CCSS
DOK:	Depth of Knowledge level of the item
Difficulty:	Difficulty estimated by the item writer: easy, medium, hard
Item Type:	Selected Response
Score Points:	Number of points possible for the item
Key:	Correct response
Stimuli/Passage(s):	Specific name of the stimuli used for the item
Stimuli/Text Complexity:	Use measures in the *ELA Stimulus Specs* document
Acknowledgement(s):	Copyright information for the stimuli
Item/Task Notes:	Information specific to this item, e.g., technology-enabled item
How this task addresses the sufficient evidence for this claim:	Explains how what the student does proves they have the skills and knowledge expressed in the claim and target.
Target-specific attributes (e.g., accessibility issues):	This cell contains information related to the target's potential accessibility issues, the stimulus text that should be on grade level for reading targets and one grade below for other targets, etc.

Sample Selected Response Item

ELA, Grade 7, Claim 1, Assessment Target 7:

Item Stem:
Which phrase signals a major change in the action of the poem?

Options:
A. "Down and away below"

B. "This way! This way!"

C. "Call no more!"

D. "Children dear, was it yesterday?"

Distractor Analysis:
A. Incorrect: While speaker tells his family that they must leave in the first stanza, the action of their departure does not begin until the third stanza.

B. Incorrect: While this phrase seems one of action, it occurs at the end of the first stanza, before the main action of the poem occurs.

C. Correct: The third stanza is the turning point of the poem, indicating the moment when the speaker and his family must leave and cannot look back. The phrase "Call no more!" represents this moment of decision.

D. Incorrect: While this is a phrase of nostalgia that relates to the main action of the poem, this is the last line of the poem, after the action of the poem has occurred.

Constructed-Response Items

The main purpose of constructed-response (CR) items is to focus primarily on one claim and one assessment target. The 2-point and 3-point reading and writing CR items and the 2-point research CR items provide a means for students to demonstrate the ability to think and to reason and to use higher-order thinking skills to provide the required evidence for one claim and target. Students will produce their own written work either in the form of a short or longer response which will be scored according to a rubric. These kinds of items demonstrate the Smarter Balanced intent to show evidence that students are ready for college or career. Item writers should use the concepts of Evidence by Design in the *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA* and the cognitive levels of item rigor described in Appendix B of this document.

CR items consist of two basic components: a stem, which provides the question and scoring information which includes a rubric, scoring notes, and sample responses. The 2-point and 3-point CR items may require an explanation with evidence of why the conclusion or inference drawn for the response is correct. CR items will be scored using either a 2-point or a 3-point holistic rubric and will take students approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. For most CR items, the question will relate to a stimulus (e.g., a reading passage or audio/visual stimulus). In addressing some ELA writing narrative targets, the stems may ask students to write about their own experience; however, these item types must be generic enough so that *all* students will be able to respond to the prompt.

Specific Guidelines for Developing CR Items

The Guidelines for Developing CR items are to be used along with the General Item Development Guidelines that appear on page 7. The following list provides specific guidelines for developing CR items:

Guidelines for Developing CR Items
• Items should be clearly written and provide rubrics along with the scoring notes and sample responses that include relevant information from the text.
• Items should present the task as simply as possible, adequately and clearly prompting the student to do everything required by the rubric for the highest rating.
• Items should allow for multiple points of view and interpretations. Student responses should allow for more than one valid interpretation or viewpoint. It is the quality of the support of a position, not the particular position taken that is important in the success of the students' response to these items. Multiple viable arguments can be made based on the prompts and passages.
• If questions ask students to draw conclusions or make claims about one or more texts, the questions should require students to refer to specific places in the text that justify their conclusions or claims.

Claims to be measured in CR items:

ELA CR items are written to Claims 1- 4. Most items are written to a single target with a few exceptions. In Claim 1 targets 4, 5, 6, and 7 have a secondary target of target 1 and targets 11, 12, 13, and 14 have the secondary target of target 8.

Scoring rubrics

Guidelines for scoring rubrics for constructed-response items are included in specifications for all items. For writing (write/revise brief texts), research, and reading, holistic rubrics will be used across grades.

Score ranges

For every ELA/literacy CR item, the total possible points will be 2 to 3 points. (See the Performance Tasks section on page 00 of this document for PT score ranges.)

Maximum time requirement per ELA/literacy CR items:

Grade 3-11: 5 to 10 minutes

Item Metadata for Constructed Response Items

When an item writer writes an item, the item is written in an Item Specification Form, which contains metadata specific to the item being written. Here is an example of an Item Specification Form for CR items. Note the similarities to the Item Table. Information from the Table should be used in the Form. There are also spaces in the form for the item parts described above.

Sample Item ID:	ELA.Gr.SR.ClaimX.XXXXX.TargetX.XXX e.g., ELA08.CR.2.04.999
Grade/Model:	Grade tested/Model number of the task model from the item specification table
Claim:	This is the statement of the claim from the Content Specifications.
Assessment Target:	This cell has the target from the Content Specifications.
Secondary Target(s):	If the target requires a secondary target from the Content Specifications, the secondary target goes in this cell.
Standard(s):	Standards from the CCSS
DOK:	Depth of Knowledge level of the item
Difficulty:	Difficulty estimated by the item writer: easy, medium, hard
Item Type:	Constructed Response
Score Points:	3 or 2 points for constructed response items
Correct Response:	See rubric below
Stimuli/Passage(s):	Specific name of the stimuli used for the item
Stimuli/Text Complexity:	
Acknowledgement(s):	Copyright information for the stimuli
Item/Task Notes:	Information specific to this item, e.g., technology-enabled item
How this task addresses the sufficient evidence for this claim:	Explains how what the student does proves they have the skills and knowledge expressed in the claim and target.
Target-specific attributes (e.g., accessibility issues):	This cell contains information related to the target's potential accessibility issues, the stimulus text that should be on grade level for reading targets and one grade below for other targets.

Sample Constructed Response Item

Claim 1, Assessment Target 11:

> *Item Prompt:*
>
> *Write a paragraph explaining why people who live in moist climates work harder to prevent mold than people that live in dry climates. Include details from the passage about how they prevent mold.*

Rubric for a 2-point CR Item	
2	A response: • Gives sufficient evidence of the ability to justify interpretations of information • Includes specific examples that make clear reference to the text • Adequately supports examples with clearly relevant information from the text
1	A response: • Gives limited evidence of the ability to justify interpretations of information • Includes some examples that make clear reference to the text. Supports examples with limited information from the text
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to justify interpretations of information, includes no relevant information from the text, or is vague.

> Scoring Notes:
> Students should explain that mold is more likely to be found in humid climates since it grows better where moisture is present. Students should tell specific ways to prevent or eliminate mold growth that are cited in the text.

> Score Point 2 Sample:
>
> The passage says, "The best way to reduce and prevent mold growth is to control moisture," and, "It is important to reduce excess moisture that molds need to grow." Since mold needs moisture to grow, it grows more easily in areas that are moist. It cannot grow as well in dry areas. To keep humidity low, people in moist areas have to fix anything that leaks water and keep rooms well ventilated. They have to get rid of any mold so it does not continue growing. People should also stay away from moist areas outside.

Score Point 1 Sample:

The passage says that mold needs moisture to grow. So it cannot grow in dry places. In moist places people have to make sure it doesn't grow in their houses.

Score Point 0 Sample:

Mold grows on just about anything, including food. Mold just keeps growing if people don't get rid of it.

Performance Tasks

The main purpose of performance tasks (PT) is to address complex targets from multiple claims that require analytical thinking, evaluations, and support of students' own responses to texts. The PTs provide a means for students to demonstrate the ability to think and to reason and to use higher-order thinking skills to provide the required evidence for multiple claims and targets. Students will produce either a full write text or present a speech which will be scored according to a rubric. These kinds of tasks demonstrate the Smarter Balanced intent to show evidence that students are ready for college or career. Item writers should use the concepts of Evidence by Design in the *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Content Specifications for ELA* and the cognitive levels of item rigor described in Appendix B of this document.

Performance Tasks consist of two basic components. In the first part, students read, research, and respond to research and possible reading questions. In the second part, students respond to the central question of the PT: This is either a writing prompt or a speech prompt. All PTs included a criteria for how the essay or speech will be scored and rubrics for both the prompt and the CRs from part 1. The PT, which has up to 20-points, has a broader focus than the CR items and draws on a wider range of skills providing an opportunity for deeper analytical thinking.

Performance Tasks will require students to read and respond to stimuli texts (e.g., research sources, a reading passage, and/or audio/visual stimulus). While every performance task will involve multiple parts and responses/products, the parts should be related, leading the students through stimulus materials to help them gather information in preparation for their final writing or presentation. Writing prompts will be scored using an analytic rubric. These prompts will always have a stimulus or scenario. Narrative prompts may require the students to write stories based on a scenario. Explanatory or informative writing requires stimuli to provide the information to be used in the response. Opinion (grades 3-5) or argumentative (grades 6-11) compositions present texts or multimedia stimuli as sources on which students can base their opinions and support them with facts and reasons from these sources.

Specific Guidelines for Developing Performance Tasks

A performance task could involve any stimulus-information processing-response combination. The lists in the table below are suggestive, not exhaustive. The maximum number of stimuli per task will increase with grade level, from one or two at grade 3 to as many as five at the high school level. Task directions will indicate if/how stimuli are to be used and/or referenced.

Structure of Performance Task		
Stimulus	**Information Processing**	**Product/Performance**
• Readings • video clips • audio clips • research topic/issue/ problem • graphs, charts, other visuals • etc.	• research questions • comprehension questions • simulated internet search • etc.	• essay, report, story, script • oral presentation or speech with/without graphics, other media • responses to embedded constructed-response questions. • etc.

While stimulus materials are to include a wide range of informational pieces, heavy emphasis in informational stimuli should be placed on material involving science or social studies content or themes to be consistent with the Common Core State Standards.

Primary claims to be measured

ELA performance tasks are to address multiple claims. With considerable variation in complexity across grades, performance tasks at any one grade will address one or more of the following combinations of claims:

- writing-narrative, research, possibly reading,
- writing-informational/explanatory, research, possibly reading,
- writing-argumentative, research, possibly reading,
- writing-opinions, research, possibly reading,
- speaking, research, reading, listening

All performance tasks will have a substantial research effort in which students read sources and answer at least three research questions (e.g., 3 CRs).This research component and the stimuli texts help to prepare the student for the ultimate task of writing a full write text or presenting a speech.

Performance task measures can include any of a number of scorable products, the most common ones being responses to embedded constructed-response questions and essays scored for several attributes or writing elements. Reading, for example, can be measured by independent constructed-response questions as well as by the inclusion of another scoring element in the analytic rubric for an essay e.g., accuracy and relevance of information or evidence from stimulus resources student uses in his/her essay. In the same way, language use can be addressed through writing and speaking. Information processing applications referred to in the table (e.g., note taking and comprehension questions) will not be scored,

Scoring rubrics

Guidelines for scoring rubrics for constructed-response items are included in specifications for all items. For writing and speaking, common analytic rubrics (with minor variations related to writing text types – narrative, informational, and argumentative) will be used across grades.

Score ranges

For every ELA/literacy performance task, the total possible points across scorable products or performances will be at least 20 points. This includes the writing or speech prompt and not the SR and CR questions.

Allowable tools

Allowable tools will be specified in the task templates/forms. Generally, for the production of scorable writing, students will have access to spell check but not to grammar check, as other conventions will typically be a writing element that is scored.

Maximum time requirement per ELA/literacy task

Grade 3-8: 105 minutes

High School: 120 minutes

Note: Any task will be completed in a single session with an embedded break. (This could be considered two, same-day, back-to-back sessions.) For the majority of tasks, the ones requiring writing of complete essays or other documents, the first 35 minutes of the task will be devoted to the reading of (or listening to) stimulus materials or to other interactions with stimuli and answering research questions. The remainder of the time (70 minutes for grades 3-8 and 85 minutes for high school) will be spent planning, editing, and writing.

Item Metadata for Performance Tasks

When an item writer writes an item, the item is written in an Item Specification Form, which contains metadata specific to the item being written. Here is an example of an Item Specification Form for a PT. Note the similarities to the Item Table. Information from the Table should be used in the Form. There are also spaces in the form for the item parts described above.

Sample Item ID:	ELA.09.PT.2.07.082
Title:	Virtual Schools
Grade/Model:	9/1
Claim(s):	Primary Claims 2: Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences. 4: Students can engage in research/inquiry to investigate topics and to analyze, integrate, and present information.
Primary Target(s):	*These claims and targets will be measured by scorable evidence collected.* Claim 2 7. COMPOSE FULL TEXTS: Write full arguments about topics or texts, attending to purpose and audience: establish and support a claim, organize and cite supporting (sources) evidence from credible sources, provide appropriate transitional strategies for coherence, and develop an appropriate conclusion 8. LANGUAGE & VOCABULARY USE: Strategically use precise language and vocabulary (including academic words, domain-specific vocabulary, and figurative language) and style appropriate to the purpose and audience when revising or composing texts 9. EDIT/CLARIFY: Apply or edit grade-appropriate grammar usage and mechanics to clarify a message and edit narrative, informational, and argumentative texts Claim 4 2. ANALYZE/INTEGRATE INFORMATION: Analyze information within and among sources of information (print and non-print texts, data sets, conducting procedures, etc.) 3. EVALUATE INFORMATION/SOURCES: Use reasoning, planning, and evidence to gather and select information to support inferences, interpretations, and analyses 4. USE EVIDENCE: Generate a claim or main idea and cite evidence to support analyses, arguments, or critiques
Secondary Target(s):	n/a
Standard(s):	W-1a, W-1b, W-1c, W-1d, W-1e, W-2d, W-3d, W-4, W-5, W-8, W-9, L-1, L-2, L-3, L-6, RI-9
DOK:	4

Difficulty:	Medium
Score Points:	TBD
Task Source:	Testing Contractor

How this task contributes to the sufficient evidence for the claims:	In order to complete the performance task, students
	1. Gather, select, and analyze information in a series of sources
	2. Write an argumentative essay effectively demonstrating
	  • a clearly-established claim about the topic
	  • presentation of relevant supporting evidence, details, and elaboration consistent with the position, sources, purpose, and audience
	  • effective organization of ideas
	  • adherence to conventions and rules of grammar, usage, and mechanics
	  • control of language for purpose and audience

Item Type:	Performance Tasks
Target-specific attributes (e.g., accessibility issues):	Students with visual and hearing impairments will need to be provided with transcripts of video material. Students with visual impairments will need to be provided with a description of the chart.

Stimuli:	Sources (1 short story, 1 article, 1 video, statistics; presented in the order in which they are used)
	Story
	The Fun They Had (word count: 1,004)
	By Isaac Asimov
	This is a short science fiction story about two children in the future where all learning is done at home with a computer. The children find a book, which tells about schools from the past where students were all together and taught by a person. The children wish they could attend such a fun school.
	Video 1: "Virtual High School Interview" September 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kChHLNgV3ec. An NBC news interview with a family using virtual schooling for their three children. (cut after interview ends) (2:23)
	Article 2
	Virtual Schools Not for Everyone
	Article discusses criticisms of virtual schools and concludes that while they are a good idea for some students in specific situations they should not be considered as a viable option for the general population. (To be written, 300-400 words)
	Research Statistics
	Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice
	Include tables (and necessary brief descriptions) from the following pages 22, 30, 31
	(http://kpk12.com/reports/graphics/)
Stimuli/Text Complexity:	

Acknowledgments:	Stimuli have been taken from the following sources: "Virtual High School Interview" September 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kChHLNgV3ec. "The Fun They Had" By Isaac Asimov Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice (http://kpk12.com/reports/graphics/) Additional source acknowledgements to be added Virtual Schools Not for Everyone
Task Notes:	

Sample Performance Tasks

Task Overview (120 total minutes):

Title: Virtual Schools

Part 1 (35 minutes): Ultimately tasked with writing an argumentative essay on virtual schools, students will read a story and article, view a video, and review research statistics, taking notes on these sources. They will then respond to three constructed-response questions addressing the research skills of analyzing and evaluating information.

Part 2 (85 minutes): Finally, students will work individually to compose full-length argumentative essays on virtual schools, referring to their notes as needed. Pre-writing, drafting, and revising will be involved.

Scorable Products: Student responses to the constructed-response questions and the essay will be scored.

Teacher preparation / Resource requirements

The teacher should assure that sufficient blank paper and writing utensils are available for student note taking. Teacher should conduct standard preparation, registration, etc., for computer-based testing. The testing software will include access to spell check, but not to grammar check.

Teacher Directions:

Students are given the texts, research, and any additional information about the essay.

Part 1 (35 minutes)

- Initiate the online testing session.
- Alert the students when 15 minutes have elapsed.
- Alert the students when there are 5 minutes remaining in part 1.

Stretch Break

Part 2 (85 minutes)

- Initiate the testing part 2.
- Allow students to access the sources and their answers to the constructed response questions presented in part 1. They will not be allowed to change their answers.
- Once 20 minutes have elapsed, suggest students begin writing their essays.
- Alert the students when 45 minutes have elapsed.
- After students have been writing for 45 minutes, alert them that there are 20 minutes remaining and suggest they begin revising their essays.
- Alert the students when there are 10 minutes remaining in the session.
- Close the testing session.

Pre-Task Activity:
There are no specific pre-task activities to be conducted.

Time Requirements: The Performance Task will take 120 minutes in one session.

Student Directions:

Part 1 (35 minutes)

Your assignment:
You will read a short story and article, watch a video, review research statistics, then write an argumentative essay about your opinion on virtual schools.

Steps you will be following:
In order to plan and compose your essay, you will do all of the following:
1.   Read a short story and article, watch a video, and review research statistics.
2.   Answer three questions about the sources.
3.   Plan and write your essay.

Directions for beginning:
You will now read the sources and watch a video. Take notes because you may want to refer back to your notes while writing your essay. You can refer back to any of the sources as often as you like.

(short story)
(article 1)
(video)
(research statistics)

Questions
Use your remaining time to answer the questions below. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, they will help you think about the sources you've read and viewed, which should help you write your essay. You may click on the appropriate buttons to refer back to the sources when you think it would be helpful. You may also refer to your notes. Answer the questions in the spaces provided below them.

1.   Analyze the different opinions expressed in "The Fun They Had" and the "Virtual High School Interview" video. Use details from the story and the video to support your answer.

2.   What do the statistics from "Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning" suggest about the current trends of virtual schools in the U.S.? Use details from the charts to support your answer.

3.   Explain how the information presented in the "Virtual High School Interview" video and the article, "Virtual Schools Not for Everyone," differs from the information in the research statistics? Support your answers with details from the video and the articles.

Part 2 (85 minutes)

You will now have 85 minutes to review your notes and sources, plan, draft, and revise your essay. You may also refer to the answers you wrote to the questions in part 1, but you cannot change those answers. Now read your assignment and the information about how your essay will be scored, then begin your work.

Your Assignment

Your parents are considering having you attend a virtual high school. Write an argumentative essay explaining why you agree or disagree with this idea. Support your claim with evidence from what you have read and viewed.

How your essay will be scored: The people scoring your essay will be assigning scores for

1.   ***Statement of purpose/focus*** – how well you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate and opposing claims

2.   ***Organization*** – how well your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay

3.   ***Elaboration of evidence*** – how well you provide evidence from sources about your opinions and elaborate with specific information

4.   ***Language and vocabulary*** – how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose

5.   ***Conventions*** – how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Now begin work on your essay. Manage your time carefully so that you can:

* plan your essay
* write your essay
* revise and edit for a final draft

Word-processing tools and spell check are available to you.

Key and scoring information for questions:

1. Claim 4, Target 2

Analyze/Integrate Information Rubric (Claim 4, Target 2)	
2	• The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.
1	• The response gives limited evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.

Scoring Notes:
Responses may include but are not limited to:
In the short story—the character does not like her virtual school, she thinks it is boring, she doesn't like her computer "teacher," she wishes she could go to a school from the past and be with other students and learn from a live person.
In the video—the family chose to attend a virtual school after attending traditional schools, it was a difficult choice and not for everyone, they are happy with their decision, the curriculum is very challenging, the older daughter misses her friends but likes her new school, it makes her a better student, she has fewer distractions.

Sample 2-point Response:
The main character in the short story does not enjoy attending a virtual school. She thinks it is boring and impersonal and especially dislikes having to insert her homework papers into a special slot for grading. When her friend finds a book about traditional schools she thinks it would be a lot more fun and interesting to attend school with other children and have a real person as a teacher. The family in the video chose to have their children attend a virtual school instead of a traditional school and they like it much better. The older girl thinks the curriculum is harder and will help her get into college. She misses her friends but thinks not having them around makes her more focused and a better student.

2. Claim 4, Target 2

Analyze/Integrate Information Rubric (Claim 4, Target 2)	
2	• The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.
1	• The response gives limited evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.

Scoring Notes:
Responses may include but are not limited to:
Not all states have on-line school options.
States that do have seen a dramatic increase in the number of on-line schools and students attending those schools.
Students attending on-line schools are still a small percentage of the total population of students.
Popularity is increasing but don't see wide-spread use.

Sample 2-point Response:
The statistics from the report suggest that while the number of students attending on-line schools has increased dramatically they still represent a small percentage of the total population of students. For example, Arizona has the highest percentage with 3.89% of all students in the state enrolled on on-line schools. These numbers indicate that on-line schools are becoming more popular but most people do not use them.

3. Claim 4, Target 3

Evaluate Information/Sources Rubric (Claim 4, Target 3)	
2	• The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources.
1	• The response gives limited evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources.

Scoring Notes:

Responses may include but are not limited to:

The article and the video provide subjective opinions about the topic. They include personal feelings and beliefs.

The report provides research statistics that can be used to draw conclusions.

Sample 2-point Response:

The video and the article present the opinions of the family being interviewed and the author. The family likes attending a virtual school and the article writer believes they are generally not a good idea. These sources are about what a few people think and how they feel about virtual schools. The report presents statistics from research. The statistics are facts about the number of students attending virtual schools but they don't tell readers anything about what virtual schools are like or whether or not they are a good idea.

See 4-point Argumentative Writing Rubric on page 00 of this document.

Holistic Rubrics

Reading and Research Holistic Rubrics

The following pages contain the generic reading (grades 3-11) and research (grades 3-11) holistic 3-point and 2-point rubrics. Student work will be scored according to a rubric. Rubrics for reading and research CR items should:

- focus on the essence of the task addressed by the stem;
- address the requirements of a specific claim and target and should reflect the language used in the stem; and
- contain specific notes beneath the rubric for scorers to consider when scoring student papers. These notes should include relevant information/details from the passage and may not be all-inclusive. The notes should follow the order in the text.

Sample Generic 3-point (Grades 3-11) Reading Rubric	
3	The response: • gives sufficient evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] • includes specific [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] that make clear reference to the text • fully supports the [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] with clearly relevant [details, examples, information] from the text
2	The response: • gives some evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] • includes some specific [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] that make reference to the text • adequately supports the [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] with relevant [details, examples, information] from the text
1	The response: • gives limited evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] • includes [inferences, opinions, identifications, etc.] but they are not explicit or make only vague references to the text • supports the [inference, opinion, identification, etc.] with at least one [detail, example] but the relevance of that [detail, example] to the text must be inferred
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] and includes no relevant information from the text.

Sample Generic 2-point (Grades 3-11)	
Reading Rubric	
2	The response: • gives sufficient evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] • includes specific [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] that make clear reference to the text • adequately supports the [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] with clearly relevant [details, examples, information] from the text
1	The response: • gives limited evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] • includes some [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] that make reference to the text • supports the [inferences, opinions, identification, etc.] with limited [details, examples, information] from the text
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] and includes no relevant information from the text.

Sample Generic 2-point Research (Grades 3–5)	
Interpret & Integrate Information Rubric (Claim 4, Target 2)	
2	The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to locate, select, interpret, and integrate information within and among sources of information.
1	The response gives limited evidence of the ability to locate, select, interpret, and integrate information within and among sources of information.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to locate, select, interpret, and integrate information within and among sources of information.

Sample Generic 2-point Research (Grades 6–11)	
Analyze/Integrate Information Rubric (Claim 4, Target 2)	
2	The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.
1	The response gives limited evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to gather, analyze, and integrate information within and among multiple sources of information.

Sample Generic 2-point Research (Grades 4–5)	
Evaluate Information/Sources Rubric (Claim 4, Target 3)	
2	The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information such as fact from opinion.
1	The response gives limited evidence of the ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information such as fact from opinion.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information such as fact from opinion.

Sample Generic 2-point Research (Grades 6–11)	
Evaluate Information/Sources Rubric (Claim 4, Target 3)	
2	The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources.
1	The response gives limited evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources.

Sample Generic 2-point Research (Grades 3–5) Use Evidence Rubric (Claim 4, Target 4)	
2	The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to cite evidence to support opinions and ideas.
1	The response gives limited evidence of the ability to cite evidence to support opinions and ideas.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to cite evidence to support opinions and ideas.

Sample Generic 2-point Research (Grades 3–5) Use Evidence Rubric (Claim 4, Target 4)	
2	The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to cite evidence to support opinions and ideas.
1	The response gives limited evidence of the ability to cite evidence to support opinions and ideas.
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to cite evidence to support opinions and ideas.

Brief Write/Revise Holistic for Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) Rubrics

The following pages contain the generic brief writing holistic 3-point and 2-point rubrics for the Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT). Student work will be scored according to a rubric. Targets 1, 3, and 6, "write/revise brief texts," require students to write brief texts. (Note: other items will measure revising skills for brief texts). The item writer should specify the text type (purpose) in the target. Item writers must specify audience. Editing/conventions will not be measured by the brief writing prompts as there will be many SR, TEI items on the CAT which measure these skills. In addition, editing will be measured in Claim 2, Target 9 and conventions in the performance tasks where students will have more time than on these brief texts. Rubrics for the brief write/revise CR items should:

- focus on the essence of the task addressed by the items;

- address the requirements of a specific claim and target, and should reflect the language used in the item; and

- contain exemplar responses of student work for each score point.

Sample Generic 3-point (Grades 3-11) Brief Writing Rubric	
3	The response: • maintains adequate focus on the topic and has adequate supporting details • has a logical organizational pattern and conveys a sense of wholeness and completeness, although some lapses occur • provides adequate transitions in an attempt to connect ideas • uses adequate language and appropriate word choices for intended audience and purpose • includes sentences, or phrases where appropriate, that are somewhat varied in length and structure
2	The response: • demonstrates an inconsistent focus on the topic and includes some supporting details, but may include extraneous or loosely related details • shows an attempt at an organizational pattern, but exhibits little sense of wholeness and completeness • provides transitions which are weak or inconsistent • has a limited and predictable vocabulary which may not be appropriate for the intended audience and purpose • shows limited variety in sentence length and structure
1	The response: • demonstrates little or no focus and few supporting details which may be inconsistent or interfere with the meaning of the text • has little evidence of an organizational pattern or any sense of wholeness and completeness • provides transitions which are poorly utilized, or fails to provide transitions • has a limited or inappropriate vocabulary for the intended audience and purpose • has little or no variety in sentence length and structure

Sample Generic 2-point (Grades 3-11) Brief Writing Rubric	
2	The response: • demonstrates sufficient focus on the topic and includes some supporting details • has an adequate organizational pattern, and conveys a sense of wholeness and completeness, although some lapses occur • provides adequate transitions in an attempt to connect ideas • uses adequate language and appropriate word choices for intended audience and purpose • includes sentences, or phrases where appropriate, that are somewhat varied in length and structure
1	The response: • demonstrates little or no focus and few supporting details which may be inconsistent or interfere with the meaning of the text • has little evidence of an organizational pattern or any sense of wholeness and completeness • provides transitions which are poorly utilized, or fails to provide transitions • has a limited or inappropriate vocabulary for the intended audience and purpose • has little or no variety in sentence length and structure
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target] and includes no relevant information from the text.

Analytical Rubrics for Performance Tasks (Full Writes)

Informative-Explanatory Analytic Performance Tasks Writing Rubrics

The following pages contain the generic analytic informative-explanatory (grades 3-5 and 6-11) rubrics. Student work will be scored according to a rubric. Targets 2, 4, and 7 will be completed as performance tasks and thus students will have up to 105 minutes in grades 3-8 and 120 minutes in high school. Rubrics for the informative and explanatory prompts should

- focus on the essence of the task addressed by the prompt;

- address the requirements of a specific claim and target and should reflect the language used in the prompt; and

- contain exemplar responses of student work for each score point.

Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)				
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
4	The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused: • controlling idea or main idea of a topic is focused, clearly stated, and strongly maintained • controlling idea or main idea of a topic is introduced and communicated clearly within the context	The response has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness: • use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical progression of ideas from beginning to end • effective introduction and conclusion for audience and purpose	The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques	The response clearly and effectively expresses ideas, using precise language: • use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors are present in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)					
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
3	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: • focus is clear and for the most part maintained, though some loosely related material may be present • some context for the controlling idea or main idea of the topic is adequate	The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety • adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end • adequate introduction and conclusion	The response provides adequate support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the use of sources, facts, and details: • some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise • adequate use of some elaborative techniques	The response adequately expresses ideas, employing a mix of precise with more general language • use of domain-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation may be present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)					
Score	Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Conventions
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
2	The response is somewhat sustained and may have a minor drift in focus: • may be clearly focused on the controlling or main idea, but is insufficiently sustained • controlling idea or main idea may be unclear and somewhat unfocused	The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end • conclusion and introduction, if present, are weak	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details: • evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present, are uneven • weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	The response expresses ideas unevenly, using simplistic language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary that may at times be inappropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)					
Score	Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Conventions
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
1	The response may be related to the topic but may provide little or no focus: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • focus may be confusing or ambiguous	The response has little or no discernible organizational structure: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from the source material is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant	The response expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary • may have little sense of audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscure
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].				

Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 6–11)					
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
4	The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused: • controlling idea or main idea of a topic is focused, clearly stated, and strongly maintained • controlling idea or main idea of a topic is introduced and communicated clearly within the context	The response has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness: • use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical progression of ideas from beginning to end • effective introduction and conclusion for audience and purpose • strong connections among ideas, with some syntactic variety	The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details. The response achieves substantial depth that is specific and relevant: • use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and concrete • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques	The response clearly and effectively expresses ideas, using precise language: • use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors are present in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

	Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Conventions
Score	Statement of Purpose/Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
3	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: • focus is clear and for the most part maintained, though some loosely related material may be present • some context for the controlling idea or main idea of the topic is adequate	The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety • adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end • adequate introduction and conclusion • adequate, if slightly inconsistent, connection among ideas	The response provides adequate support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the use of sources, facts, and details: • some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise • adequate use of some elaborative techniques	The response adequately expresses ideas, employing a mix of precise with more general language • use of domain-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation may be present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 6–11)

	Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 6–11)				
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
2	The response is somewhat sustained and may have a minor drift in focus: • may be clearly focused on the controlling or main idea, but is insufficiently sustained • controlling idea or main idea may be unclear and somewhat unfocused	The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end • conclusion and introduction, if present, are weak • weak connection among ideas	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details: • evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present, are uneven • weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	The response expresses ideas unevenly, using simplistic language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary that may at times be inappropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

	Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus**	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	**Conventions**
1	The response may be related to the topic but may provide little or no focus: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • focus may be confusing or ambiguous	The response has little or no discernible organizational structure: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from the source material is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant	The response expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary • may have little sense of audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscure
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].				

Sample Generic 4-point Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades 6–11)

Opinion-Argumentative Writing Analytic Rubrics

The following pages contain the generic analytic opinion writing (grades 3-5) and argumentative writing (grade 6-11) rubrics. Student work will be scored according to a rubric. Targets 2, 4, and 7 will be completed as performance tasks and thus students will have up to 105 minutes in grades 3-8 and 120 minutes in high school. Rubrics for the opinion and argumentative prompts should

- focus on the essence of the task addressed by the prompt;

- address the requirements of a specific claim and target and should reflect the language used in the prompt; and

- contain exemplar responses of student work for each score point.

Sample Generic 4-point Opinion Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)				
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
4	The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused: • opinion is clearly stated, focused, and strongly maintained • opinion is communicated clearly within the context	The response has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness: • effective, consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical progression of ideas from beginning to end • effective introduction and conclusion for audience and purpose	The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques	The response clearly and effectively expresses ideas, using precise language: • use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Opinion Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)					
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
3	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: • opinion is clear and for the most part maintained, though some loosely related material may be present • context provided for the claim is adequate	The response has a recognizable organizational structure, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety • adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end • adequate introduction and conclusion	The response provides adequate support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes the use of sources, facts, and details: • some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise • adequate use of some elaborative techniques	The response adequately expresses ideas, employing a mix of precise with more general language • use of domain-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation are present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Opinion Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)				
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
2	The response is somewhat sustained with some extraneous material or a minor drift in focus: • may be clearly focused on the opinion but is insufficiently sustained • opinion on the issue may be unclear and unfocused	The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end • conclusion and introduction, if present, are weak	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details: • evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present, are uneven • weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	The response expresses ideas unevenly, using simplistic language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary that may at times be inappropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Opinion Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)					
Score	Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Conventions
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
1	The response may be related to the purpose but may offer little or no focus: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • opinion may be confusing or ambiguous	The response has little or no discernible organizational structure: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the writer's opinion that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant	The response expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary • may have little sense of audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscured
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].				

Sample Generic 4-point Argumentative Writing Rubric (Grades 6-11)					
Score	Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Conventions
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
4	The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused: • claim is clearly stated, focused and strongly maintained • alternate or opposing claims are clearly addressed* • claim is introduced and communicated clearly within the context	The response has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness: • effective, consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical progression of ideas from beginning to end • effective introduction and conclusion for audience and purpose • strong connections among ideas, with some syntactic variety	The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the writer's claim that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details. The response achieves substantial depth that is specific and relevant: • use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, relevant, and concrete • effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques	The response clearly and effectively expresses ideas, using precise language: • use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors are present in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Argumentative Writing Rubric (Grades 6-11)					
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
3	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: • claim is clear and for the most part maintained, though some loosely related material may be present • context provided for the claim is adequate	The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety • adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end • adequate introduction and conclusion • adequate, if slightly inconsistent, connection among ideas	The response provides adequate support/evidence for writer's claim that includes the use of sources, facts, and details. The response achieves some depth and specificity but is predominantly general: • some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise • adequate use of some elaborative techniques	The response adequately expresses ideas, employing a mix of precise with more general language • use of domain-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation may be present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Argumentative Writing Rubric (Grades 6-11)					
Score	Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Conventions
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
2	The response is somewhat sustained and may have a minor drift in focus: • may be clearly focused on the claim but is insufficiently sustained • claim on the issue may be somewhat unclear and unfocused	The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of basic transitional strategies with little variety • uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end • conclusion and introduction, if present, are weak • weak connection among ideas	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the writer's claim that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details, and achieves little depth: • evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present, are uneven • weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques	The response expresses ideas unevenly, using simplistic language: • use of domain-specific vocabulary may at times be inappropriate for the audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Argumentative Writing Rubric (Grades 6-11)					
Score	**Statement of Purpose/Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Conventions**
	Statement of Purpose/Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
1	The response may be related to the purpose but may offer little relevant detail: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • claim may be confusing or ambiguous	The response has little or no discernible organizational structure: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the writer's claim that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant	The response expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary • may have little sense of audience and purpose	The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscure
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].				

Begins in 7th grade

Narrative Writing Analytic Rubrics for Grades3-8 Performance Tasks

The following pages contain the generic analytic writing narrative (grades 3-8) rubric. Student work will be scored according to a rubric. Targets 2, 4, and 7 will be completed as performance tasks and thus students will have up to 105 minutes in grades 3-8. Rubrics for the narrative writing prompt should

- focus on the essence of the task addressed by the prompt;

- address the requirements of a specific claim and target and should reflect the language used in the prompt; and

- contain exemplar responses of student work for each score point.

Sample Generic 4-point Narrative Writing Rubric (Grades 3–8)				
Score	**Establishment of Narrative Focus and Organization**		**Development: Elaboration and Language**		**Conventions**
	Narrative Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Narrative**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
4	The narrative, real or imagined, is clearly focused and maintained throughout: • effectively establishes a setting, narrator and/or characters, and point of view*	The narrative, real or imagined, has an effective plot helping create unity and completeness: • effective, consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies • logical sequence of events from beginning to end • effective opening and closure for audience and purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, provides thorough and effective elaboration using details, dialogue, and description: • effective use of a variety of narrative techniques that advance the story or illustrate the experience	The narrative, real or imagined, clearly and effectively expresses experiences or events: • effective use of sensory, concrete, and figurative language clearly advance the purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates a strong command of conventions: • few, if any, errors in usage and sentence formation • effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Narrative Writing Rubric (Grades 3–8)				
Score	**Establishment of Narrative Focus and Organization**		**Development: Elaboration and Language**		**Conventions**
	Narrative Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Narrative**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
3	The narrative, real or imagined, is adequately focused and generally maintained throughout: • adequately establishes a setting, narrator and/or characters, and point of view*	The narrative, real or imagined, has an evident plot helping create a sense of unity and completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of a variety of transitional strategies • adequate sequence of events from beginning to end • adequate opening and closure for audience and purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, provides adequate elaboration using details, dialogue, and description: • adequate use of a variety of narrative techniques that generally advance the story or illustrate the experience	The narrative, real or imagined, adequately expresses experiences or events: • adequate use of sensory, concrete, and figurative language generally advance the purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates an adequate command of conventions: • some errors in usage and sentence formation but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed • adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Narrative Writing Rubric (Grades 3–8)					
Score	Establishment of Narrative Focus and Organization		Development: Elaboration and Language		Conventions
	Narrative Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Narrative	Language and Vocabulary	
2	The narrative, real or imagined, is somewhat maintained and may have a minor drift in focus: • inconsistently establishes a setting, narrator and/or characters, and point of view*	The narrative, real or imagined, has an inconsistent plot, and flaws are evident: • inconsistent use of basic transitional strategies with little variety • uneven sequence of events from beginning to end • opening and closure, if present, are weak • weak connection among ideas	The narrative, real or imagined, provides uneven, cursory elaboration using partial and uneven details, dialogue, and description: • narrative techniques, if present, are uneven and inconsistent	The narrative, real or imagined, unevenly expresses experiences or events: • partial or weak use of sensory, concrete, and figurative language that may not advance the purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates a partial command of conventions: • frequent errors in usage may obscure meaning • inconsistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Sample Generic 4-point Narrative Writing Rubric (Grades 3–8)				
Score	**Establishment of Narrative Focus and Organization**		**Development: Elaboration and Language**		**Conventions**
	Narrative Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Narrative**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
1	The narrative, real or imagined, may be maintained but may provide little or no focus: • may be very brief • may have a major drift • focus may be confusing or ambiguous	The narrative, real or imagined, has little or no discernable plot: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude	The narrative, real or imagined, provides minimal elaboration using little or no details, dialogue, and description: • use of narrative techniques is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant	The narrative, real or imagined, expression of ideas is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language • may have little sense of purpose	The narrative, real or imagined, demonstrates a lack of command of conventions: • errors are frequent and severe and meaning is often obscured
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to [fill in with key language from the intended target].				

Point of view begins in Grade 7.

Speech Analytical Rubric for Grades 3-11 Performance Tasks

The following pages contain the generic analytic speech (grades 3-11) rubric. Student work will be scored according to a rubric. Targets 2, 4, and 7 will be completed as performance tasks and thus students will have up to 105 minutes in grades 3-8 and 120 minutes in high school. Rubrics for the speech prompts should

- focus on the essence of the task addressed by the prompt;

- address the requirements of a specific claim and target and should reflect the language used in the prompt; and

- contain exemplar responses of student work for each score point.

Sample Generic 4-point Speech Rubric (Grades 3-11)					
Score	Establishment of Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Presentation
	Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
4	The speech is consistently and purposefully focused: • controlling idea, opinion, or claim is clearly stated and strongly maintained • controlling idea, opinion or claim is introduced and communicated clearly within the context	The speech has a clear and effective organizational structure helping create unity and completeness: • employs a strong opening and logical progression of ideas • effective introduction and conclusion for audience and purpose	The speech provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the writer's controlling idea, opinion, or claim that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details: • use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated and relevant	The speech clearly and effectively expresses ideas: • use of precise language (including academic and domain-specific language) • consistent use of syntax and discourse appropriate to the audience and purpose	The speech is clearly and smoothly presented: • use of effective eye contact and volume with clear pronunciation • understandable pace adapted to the audience • consistently aware of audience's engagement • use of strong visual/graphics/audio enhancements, when appropriate, to effectively clarify message.

Sample Generic 4-point Speech Rubric (Grades 3-11)					
Score	Establishment of Focus and Organization		Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence		Presentation
	Focus	Organization	Elaboration of Evidence	Language and Vocabulary	
3	The speech is adequately and generally focused: • controlling idea, opinion, or claim is clear and for the most part maintained though some loosely related material may be present • some context for the controlling idea, opinion, or claim	The speech has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, though some ideas may be loosely connected: • adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety • ideas progress from beginning to end • introduction and conclusion are adequate • adequate, if slightly inconsistent, connection among ideas	The speech provides adequate support/evidence for the writer's controlling idea, opinion, or claim that includes the use of sources, facts, and details: • some evidence from sources is smoothly integrated though may be general or imprecise	The speech adequately expresses ideas employing a mix of precise with more general language: • use of academic and domain-specific language is adequate • use of syntax and discourse generally appropriate to the audience and purpose	The speech is adequately presented with minor flaws: • appropriate use of eye contact, volume, and pronunciation • generally understandable pace adapted to the audience • sufficiently aware of audience's engagement • sufficient use of visual/graphics/audio enhancements, when appropriate, to clarify message

Sample Generic 4-point Speech Rubric (Grades 3-11)					
Score	**Establishment of Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Presentation**
	Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
2	The speech is somewhat unclear and unfocused: • controlling idea, opinion, or claim is for the most part maintained though there may be a minor drift • controlling idea, opinion, or claim may be lacking an appropriate context	The speech has an inconsistent organizational structure: • inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • ideas progress unevenly from beginning to end • introduction and conclusion, if present, may be weak • weak connection among ideas	The speech provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the writer's controlling idea, opinion, or claim that includes partial or superficial use of sources, facts, and details: • evidence from sources is weakly integrated	The speech inconsistently expresses ideas employing simplistic language: • insufficient use of academic and domain-specific language • use of syntax and discourse may at times be inappropriate to the audience and purpose	The speech is unevenly presented with evident flaws : • inconsistent use of eye contact, volume, and pronunciation • pace partially adapted to the audience • partially aware of audience's engagement • sufficient use of visual/graphics/audio enhancements, when appropriate, to clarify message

Sample Generic 4-point Speech Rubric (Grades 3-11)					
Score	**Establishment of Focus and Organization**		**Development: Language and Elaboration of Evidence**		**Presentation**
	Focus	**Organization**	**Elaboration of Evidence**	**Language and Vocabulary**	
1	The speech is unclear and unfocused: • controlling idea, opinion, or claim may have a major drift • controlling idea, opinion, or claim may be confusing or ambiguous	The speech has little or no discernible organizational structure: • few or no transitional strategies are evident • frequent extraneous ideas may intrude	The speech provides minimal support/evidence for the writer's controlling idea, opinion, or claim that includes little or no use of sources, facts, or details: • evidence from sources is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant	The speech expresses vague ideas, lacks clarity, or is confusing: • uses limited language or domain-specific vocabulary • rudimentary use of syntax and discourse inappropriate for the audience and purpose	The speech is presented with serious flaws that obscure meaning: • infrequent eye contact, and inappropriate volume and pronunciation • pace not adapted to the audience • little or no sense of audience's engagement • little or no visual/graphics/audio enhancements to clarify message
0	A speech gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to {fill in with key language from the intended target}.				

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

The following definitions refer to terms used throughout the *ELA Item and Tasks Specifications* document. The terms are used for various parts of an item or task that Smarter Balanced intends to use in its assessment system in order to connect the English Language Arts assessment with the ELA Common Core Standards and the ELA Content Specifications;

Term	Definition
Distractor analysis	the item writer's analysis of the options to an item
Distractors	the incorrect responses (options) to an SR item
Item	the entire item/task including the stimulus, question, answer/options, scoring criteria, and the metadata
Key	the correct response(s) to an item
Options	the responses to an SR stem from which the student selects an answer or multiple answers
Rubric	a score scale with descriptors for each score point
Stem	the statement of the question or prompt to which the students must respond
Stimulus	the text or source about which the item is written. The student reads/views/listens to it and then responds to the item/task question.

APPENDIX B

Cognitive Levels

Smarter Balanced items should demonstrate that students have the ability to integrate knowledge and skills across multiple targets and are ready to meet the challenges of college and careers. Those items must be constructed at various levels of cognitive rigor representing different points on the Levels of Complexity scale. The numbers in the chart below represent the numbers to be used in the Smarter Balanced tables and forms for DOK.

This matrix from the *Smarter Balanced Content Specifications for ELA* draws from both Bloom's (revised) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* and Webb's *Depth-of-Knowledge Levels* below.

Depth of Thinking (Webb) + Type of Thinking (Revised Bloom, 2001)	DOK Level 1 Recall & Reproduction	DOK Level 2 Basic Skills & Concepts	DOK Level 3 Strategic Thinking & Reasoning	DOK Level 4 Extended Thinking
Remember	- Recall, locate basic facts, definitions, details, events			
Understand	- Select appropriate words for use when intended meaning is clearly evident	- Specify, explain relationships - summarize – identify central ideas	- Explain, generalize, or connect ideas using supporting evidence (quote, text evidence, example…)	- Explain how concepts or ideas specifically relate to other content domains or concepts
Apply	- Use language structure (pre/suffix) or word relationships (synonym/antonym) to determine meaning	– Use context to identify word meanings - Obtain and interpret information using text features	- Use concepts to solve non-routine problems	- Devise an approach among many alternatives to research a novel problem
Analyze	- Identify the kind of information contained in a graphic, table, visual, etc.	– Compare literary elements, facts, terms, events – Analyze format, organization, & text structures	- Analyze or interpret author's craft (e.g., literary devices, viewpoint, or potential bias) to critique a text	– Analyze multiple sources or texts - Analyze complex/ abstract themes
Evaluate			– Cite evidence and develop a logical argument for conjectures based on one text or problem	- Evaluate relevancy, accuracy, & completeness of information across texts/ sources
Create	- Brainstorm ideas, concepts, problems, or perspectives related to a topic or concept	-Generate conjectures or hypotheses based on observations or prior knowledge and experience	-Develop a complex model for a given situation -Develop an alternative solution	-Synthesize information across multiple sources or texts -Articulate a new voice, alternate theme, new knowledge or perspective

Figure 1: A Snapshot of Cognitive Rigor Matrix (Hess, Carlock, Jones, & Walkup; 2009)

Vocabulary*

The *CCSS Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards,* defines three tiers of vocabulary words identified in current reading research. When choosing vocabulary words to be tested, it is important to distinguish among the following tiers:

Tier 1 words comprise the most basic, everyday words in our language (e.g., words of Anglo-Saxon origin like *head, hand, book, girl,* and *dog*). Tier 1 words will seldom appear as tested vocabulary words on common-core assessments.

Tier 2 words are those that have wide use in academic writing and are important to student learning across many topics and all grade levels. As noted in *CCSS Appendix A,* tier 2 words are "highly transferable general academic words (for example, qualifying adjectives and adverbs such as *important* and *typically*) are used broadly across domains (areas or fields of knowledge) and in situations outside of the classroom." These words should appear in the vocabulary-focused questions on assessments aligned to the common core in grades 3 through high school.

Tier 3 words are low-frequency and domain-specific, the kinds of terms that tend to be footnoted in texts that are written about specific, focused topics (e.g., *legislature* and *circumference*). As stated in Appendix A, "Students typically learn these words . . . either by being taught them directly or by reading multiple selections from multiple authors within those domains." These words will seldom be the focus of vocabulary questions on common core assessments.

Developing vocabulary questions in assessments requires a focus on tier 2 words at all grade levels. The standards have a special focus on the academic vocabulary common to complex texts in all disciplines, and assessments should share that focus in its treatment of vocabulary.

On the following page is a brief list of some representative tier 2 words chosen from the thousands of such words in English. The list is suggestive, not exhaustive. The words are listed in approximate grade-level bands to show that there are important tier 2 words to be taught and tested at every grade level. These words are used in many different contexts and exhibit various shades of meaning based on those contexts. Some of them are homographs, but most are not. Students who know tier 2 words like the ones listed on the follow page are greatly advantaged in the close, analytic reading required by the Common Core standards.

*Appendix C, Vocabulary was adapted from the Common Core State Standards and the Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards

Partial, Representative List of Tier 2 Words		
Likely to be in the 3-5 grade band	Likely to be in the 6-8 grade band	Likely to be in the 9-11 grade band
Different	assume	specify
important	identify	technique
choose	conclude*	compensate
faithful	alternative	arbitrary
stable*	consist	random
exactly	contribute	suffice
center	definite	verify
explain	distinct	perspective
excuse*	evident	pertinent
according	expand	evaluate
actually	indicate	feasible
bound*	individual	passive
declare	initial*	simultaneous
experience	intense	component
figure*	major*	formulate
fortunate	method	magnitude
gradually	publish	manipulate
necessary	structure	ultimate
ordinary	emphasize	criterion
measure*	illustrate	hypothesis
approach	exaggerate	fluctuate
period*	approximate	innovation
establish	complicate	respective
achieve	modify	subsequent
ignore	tradition	benevolent
select	transmit	malign
automatic	restrict	abstraction
concentrate*	negative*	coherent
construct	convert	emanate
consult	analyze	impervious
establish	consequent	succumb
demonstrate	impact	transitory
interpret	potential	empirical
obtain	precise	entity

*designates homographs