



Formative Single-Point Rubric

Argument Writing
3rd Grade ELA

December 18, 2025

Ellen E. Weaver
State Superintendent of Education

Contents

Introduction.....	3
How to Use a Single-Point Rubric	4
Argumentative Elements for 3rd Grade	6
3 rd -Grade Opinion Single-Point Rubric	8
Element: Topic.....	9
Element: Opinion	12
Element: Reasons	14
Element: Details	16
Element: Organization	19
Element: Transitions	25
Element: Language and Vocabulary.....	29
Element: Grammar and Conventions.....	32
Element: Punctuation.....	34
Element: Capitalization	36

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

How to Use a Single-Point Rubric

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

Example: Transitional Words and Phrases

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

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

Student Sample: Figure 1

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

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

Example: Providing Suggestions and Noting Strengths

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

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

Steps for Using a Single-Point Rubric

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

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

Argumentative Elements for 3rd Grade

The following definitions are based on the definitions provided in the *2024 SC CCR ELA Standards* Glossary of Terms. The Glossary applies to K-12 instruction. The language of the following definitions has been adapted to suit 3rd-grade ELA instruction.

Texts

Before a student can write an opinion piece or argument, the student must have a text(s) that provides information on a topic. Students will use this text(s) to learn about the topic before writing and will use the text(s) to provide details and facts (grades 2-5).

Topic

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

Opinion

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

Reason(s)

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

Details and Facts

A student uses *details* to support his or her reason(s) and opinion. *Details* provide additional information to support the reason(s). In third grade, details come from the provided source material (evidence).

Organization

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

Transitional Words and Phrases

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

Language and Vocabulary

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

Grammar, Capitalization, Punctuation, and Sentence Structure

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

3rd-Grade Opinion Single-Point Rubric

Each targeted criterion of 3rd-grade argumentative writing can be addressed singularly or in groups, depending on the instructional focus and the individual student's strengths and weaknesses.

Suggestions	Criteria	Strengths
	Topic: The student states a topic and stays on topic throughout the response.	
	Opinion: The student states a clear opinion on the topic.	
	Reasons: The student provides reasons that explain why he or she thinks a certain way about the topic.	
	Details: The student provides details to support his or her reasons and opinion.	
	Organization: The student organizes the opinion, reasons, and details in a way that is clear to the reader.	
	Transitions: The student uses transitions to connect ideas. The transitions support the organization of the written work.	
	Language and Vocabulary: The student chooses language that supports the topic.	
	Sentence Structure: The student uses a variety of grammatically correct simple and compound sentences.	
	Punctuation: The student correctly uses punctuation.	
	Capitalization: The student correctly uses capitalization.	

Element: Topic

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

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

A student who is on target will

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

A student who needs support may

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

Student Sample 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

Element: Topic or Issue

Student 1

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

Suggestions for Student 1

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

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

Example of a Graphic Organizer

Opinion Statement:

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

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

Element: Opinion

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

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

A student who is on target will

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

A student who needs support may

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

Student Sample 1

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

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

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

Student Sample 2

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

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

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

Commentary**Criterion: Opinion Statement****Student 1**

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

Student 2

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

Suggestions for Student 2

The following suggestions are targeted at the writer of the second student sample.

These suggestions were written to support this student writer and may not apply to all students.

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

Element: Reasons

Criterion: The student provides reasons that explain why he or she thinks a certain way about the topic.

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

A student who is on target will

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

A student who needs support may

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

Student Sample 1

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

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

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

Commentary
Element: Reasons

Student 1

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

Suggestions for Student 1

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

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

Element: Details

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

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

A student who is on target will

- provide at least one reason that supports his or her opinion.
- provide at least one detail from the text to support each reason.
- select a detail from the text that logically connects to the reason it supports.

A student who needs support may

- not provide a reason.
- include a reason, but it does not support his or her opinion.
- inconsistently provide details to support reasons.
- select details from the text that are unrelated to the reason(s) or opinion.
- neglect to provide details from the text.

Student Sample 1

The teacher read two articles with students. Students were then asked to read the articles again on their own. The articles were about cats and dogs. After the second reading, students were asked to write an opinion response answering the question, “Which kind of pet is better, a cat or a dog?”

I feel that dogs are better pets than cats for many reasons. Here are the three reasons why dogs are perfect pets. They make you healthy. They are good friends. They are good listeners.

Dogs can make their owners healthy. In the text it said that “dogs make many people healthy”. One example is they help them get better quicker because they are going to be around you. Another is if they are healthy you will get healthy to. Dogs are usually healthy because they try to stay healthy.

They can make you happy. In the text it said that “dogs can be good friends”. One example is they can make you happy when your sad because you got in trouble. Also they are kind and they don’t hurt you or scare you.

They listen well. In the text it said, “that they are really good listeners”. For example they have good ears. They can’t tell anyone because they can’t talk. You can pretty much tell them anything.

Dogs are great pets. I told you about three things where they can make you healthy, they are good friends, and they are great listeners. Dogs are amazing as pets.

Student Sample 2

The teacher read two articles with students. Students were then asked to read the articles again on their own. The articles were about cats and dogs. After the second reading, students were asked to write an opinion response answering the question, “Which kind of pet is better, a cat or a dog?”

Do you think dogs or cats are good pets? Well I think dogs are good pets. You are going to learn about why I think dogs are good pets.

First, dogs can make you healthier. You can walk with your dog and get stronger muscles. Next. Dogs keep you safe by barking if there is danger. Last, they make you healthier.

You have learned three things about why dogs are good pets.

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

Commentary**Element: Details****Student 1**

Student 1 provides three reasons to support his or her opinion that dogs make better pets than cats. As the student discusses each reason, he or she provides one detail from the text that logically supports the reason. The student then explains how each detail from the source material supports each reason.

Student 2

Student 2 provides three reasons why he or she thinks dogs make good pets. In the second paragraph, the student states three reasons (repeating one of the reasons). The student does not use details from the source material to support the reasons. The reader can assume that the text might discuss how walking a dog builds muscles, but that is not made clear because of the lack of specific details from the texts.

Suggestions for Student 2

A suggestion for this student is to outline his or her opinion piece before writing it. A variation of the organizational graphic organizer on page 11 follows:

Example of a Graphic Organizer

Question: Which is a better pet, a cat or a dog?

Opinion (What do I think about this?): The student's opinion should choose a side and provide his or her opinion on which animal makes a better pet.

Reason 1 (Why do I think this?): The student should tell why he or she thinks the selected animal is the better pet.	Reason 2 (Why do I think this?)
Detail (How do I know this?): What is in the text that the student can use to support his or her reason? If the student says the dog is the better pet because dogs help people stay healthy. The student should be able to find a detail in the text that supports this. The detail doesn't have to say, "dogs make people healthy," but it should be a detail related to the improvement a dog can bring to its owner's health.	Detail (How do I know this?)

Element: Organization

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

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate the organization. Transitions play an essential role in organizing writing.

A student who is on target will

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

A student who needs support may

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

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

Student Sample 1

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

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

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

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

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

Student Sample 2

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

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

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

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

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

Commentary

Element: Organization

Student 1

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

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

The student’s reasons are highlighted in green:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Student 2

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

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

The fact from the source text is highlighted in blue:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suggestions for Student 2

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

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

Example of a Graphic Organizer

Opinion: We should let students nap after lunch.

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

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

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

Word Bank

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

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

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

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

Element: Transitions

Criterion: The student uses transitions to connect ideas. The transitions support the organization of the written work.

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

A student who is on target will

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

A student who needs support may

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

Student Sample 1

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

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

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

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

Student Sample 2

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

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

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

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

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

We should not have to take a nap at school.

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

Commentary**Elements: Organization and Transitional Strategies****Student 1**

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

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

Student 2

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

Suggestions for Student 2

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

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

Example Strategy

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

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

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

_____, we should not have to take a nap at school.

Element: Language and Vocabulary

Criterion: The student chooses language that supports the topic.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for *language and vocabulary*. The K-3 student should use vocabulary that is related to the topic. A student's use of language contributes to his or her style and voice.

A student who is on target will

- use words specific to the topic and purpose.
- use words to aid the reader's understanding.
- use words to enhance the response.

A student who needs support may

- use vague words, leaving the reader to determine what it "could mean".
- use words that are unrelated to the topic and detract from the reader's understanding.

Student Sample 1

The teacher read two articles with students. Students were then asked to read the articles again on their own. The articles were about cats and dogs. After the second reading, students were asked to write an opinion response answering the question, "Which kind of pet is better, a cat or a dog?"

Cats are better than dogs. Why are they better? One reason is because they can groom themselves. Another reason is because they don't always need attention. They can just do what they want while you are at school.

Cats groom themselves. This makes them a better pet because you don't have to groom them and they will still be clean. That helps a lot because you can do your work or go to school and not be late because you don't have to spend time washing them.

Cats don't need attention. They don't get lonely when you are at school. They entertain themselves by playing with string or chasing squirrels outside.

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

Student Sample 2

The teacher read two articles with students. Students were then asked to read the articles again on their own. The articles were about cats and dogs. After the second reading, students were asked to write an opinion response answering the question, “Which kind of pet is better, a cat or a dog?”

Do you want a cat or a dog ? I think dogs are better than cats. Cats are calmer than dogs. Dogs can help people get around if they are blind. Cats can be mean. I like dogs better than cats.

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

Commentary**Element: Language and Voice****Student 1**

Student 1 uses vocabulary that is specific to the topic. For example, the student states that cats “groom” themselves. In the last paragraph, the student states that cats do not need to “be entertained” and then goes on to provide specific examples of how cats might entertain themselves, using the phrases “playing with string” and “chasing squirrels”.

Student 2

Student 2 provides the opinion that “cats are better than dogs.” Because the student never clarifies that he or she thinks cats are better pets than dogs, the reader is missing specific information. If the reader did not have access to what the student was assigned to write, the reader would never know the context of which animal makes a better pet. Because this student does not elaborate on his or her ideas, some of the ideas are vague and unclear to the reader. For example, the student states, “I think dogs are better than cats.” In the next sentence though, the student claims that “cats are calmer than dogs.” How does this statement support the student’s opinion that dogs are better pets than cats?

Suggestions for Student 2

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

- Reading and writing are connected. Reading helps a student develop his or her vocabulary.
- Present the student with a short written piece that uses vague language, such as “things”. Provide the student with a list of words that can replace the different “things” throughout the work. Go through the paper together. When you encounter a

vague word, such as “things,” ask the student, “What things?” Ask the student to choose a word or phrase from the list to replace the word “things” in the written work.

- Read through the student’s response with the student. Ask questions such as, “what do you mean when you ask if the reader wants a cat or a dog?” Asking questions like this will allow the student the opportunity to think through what he or she meant to write and what he or she actually wrote. Sometimes hearing it helps the student better understand that the language and details are vague.

Element: Grammar and Conventions

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

By the end of second grade, students are expected to master the discrete skills outlined in ELA.3.C.4.1. Additionally, students are still implementing the skills from K-2. Teachers are advised to refer to the grammatical elements in the K-2 documents.

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

- write one or more grammatically correct simple sentences.
- write one or more grammatically correct compound sentences.
- write one or more grammatically correct complex sentences.
- use end punctuation.
- use interrogative and demonstrative pronouns.
- use and place comparative and superlative adjectives.
- use and place prepositional phrases.
- use and place nouns.
- use and place verbs.
- use the correct verb tense.
- use and place adjectives.
- use and place adverbs.
- use and place coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.
- use and place independent clauses.
- use and place dependent clauses.

A student who needs support may

- write one or more sentence fragments.
- write one or more run-on sentences.
- misplace or not use end punctuation.
- misuse or misplace demonstrative pronouns.
- misuse or misplace comparative or superlative adjectives.
- misuse or misplace prepositional phrases.
- misplace or not include a noun.
- misplace or not include a verb.
- use the incorrect verb tense.
- misplace and adjective or adverb.
- misplace or not use a coordinating to subordinating conjunction.
- misplace an independent clause (affected by punctuation.)

Students should be expected to use an element only when appropriate for the written work. For example, not every sentence requires a subordinating conjunction.

Student Sample 1

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

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

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

Commentary

Element: Grammar and Conventions

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

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

Element: Punctuation

Criterion: The student correctly uses punctuation.

By the end of second grade, students are expected to master the discrete skills outlined in ELA.3.C.4.1. Additionally, students are still implementing the skills from K-2. Teachers are advised to refer to the grammatical elements in the K-2 documents.

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

- use end punctuation.
- use periods to punctuate abbreviations.
- use periods within quotation marks.
- use a comma to indicate quotations from a text.
- use commas to separate items in a series.
- use a comma(s) to separate phrases.
- use a comma(s) to separate clauses.
- use an apostrophe to create a contraction(s).
- use punctuation to avoid a run-on sentence.

A student who needs support may

- not use end punctuation
- misplace or not use a period to punctuate an abbreviation.
- misplace or not use a period within quotation marks.
- misplace or not use a comma to indicate quotations from a text.
- misplace or not use one or more commas to separate items in a series.
- misplace or not use a comma to separate one or more clauses.
- misplace or not use a comma to create a contraction.
- misuse or not use punctuation, resulting in one or more run-on sentences.

Students should be expected to use an element only when appropriate for the written work. For example, not every sentence requires a contraction.

Student Sample 1

The wind was blowing the sun wasn't shining.

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

Commentary

Element: Punctuation

Student 1

Student 1 does not use the appropriate punctuation between two independent clauses.

Suggestions for Student 1

- Revisit the definitions of clause, independent clause, and dependent clause. Provide examples of each. Talk through the examples with the student, asking the student to identify and explain the different types of clauses in the examples. Then, discuss the types of punctuation and conjunctions needed to join the clauses.
- Create four sets of cards, one set containing dependent clauses, one set containing independent clauses, one set containing conjunctions, and one set containing punctuation marks. Place one independent and dependent clause together in front of the student and ask him or her what type of clauses they are and to place the correct punctuation mark between the clauses. Do the same with two independent clause cards. Continue the process to ensure the student understands the difference between the two types and the correct types of punctuation. Then ask the student to correct his or her sentences.

Element: Capitalization

Criterion: The student correctly uses capitalization.

By the end of third grade, students are expected to master the discrete skills outlined in ELA.3.C.4.1. Additionally, students are still implementing the skills from K-2. Teachers are advised to refer to the grammatical elements in the K-2 documents.

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

- capitalize the first letter of the first word in a sentence.
- capitalize the pronoun I.
- capitalize proper nouns.
- capitalize the names of organizations, monuments, and landmarks.
- capitalize appropriate words in a title.
- capitalize appropriate words in dialogue.

A student who needs support may

- not capitalize the first letter of the first word in a sentence.
- not capitalize the pronoun I.
- not capitalize one or more proper nouns.
- not capitalize one or more names of organizations, monuments, or landmarks.
- not capitalize one or more appropriate words in a title.
- capitalize one or more words in a title that do not need to be capitalized.
- not capitalize one or more appropriate words in dialogue.
- capitalize one or more words in dialogue that do not need to be capitalized.

Students should be expected to use an element only when appropriate for the written work. For example, not every written work will include dialogue.

Student Sample 1

Pizza is the best food because it has cheese and sauce. Pizza from mary's pizza kitchen is delicious. It is near scott park. The mushroom and swiss pizze is uncle joe's favorite. Pizza is the greatest food to eat.

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

Commentary

Element: Capitalization

Suggestions for Student 1

- Create anchor charts with capitalization rules with examples. Provide paper handouts for the student to use as a reference.
- During read-alouds, have students to identify capitalized words and explain why they are capitalized.
- Frequently provide sentences and paragraphs with capitalization for students to edit.
- Incorporate capitalization into daily lessons and assignments.
- Provide students with checklists to use when editing.