Louisiana Believes

Guide to Using the *ELPT Sample Writing Items* (Grades 6-12)
Webinar September 18, 2019
Today’s Goals

At the end of this presentation, participants will understand:

• Overview of ELs and Writing
• How to use the *ELPT Sample Writing Items*
• What the writing items look like
• How to use these collaboratively
• How to use the annotations
• How to provide more practice
The *ELPT sample writing items* were created to provide students and test administrators with:

- an opportunity to practice the type of constructed-response items on ELPT
- an opportunity to assess students’ writing abilities and create more individualized instructional strategies
- a medium to foster more collaboration between EL and ELA teachers

These items can be used multiple times. While they are paper based, we encourage you to have students respond on the computer to better familiarize themselves with this process.
LA Connectors for ELs and Writing

There are four LA Connectors for ELs that address writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connector</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Construct grade-appropriate oral and written claims and support them with reasoning and evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Adapt language choices to purpose, task, and audience when speaking and writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Create clear and coherent grade-appropriate speech and text</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Make accurate use of standard-English to communicate in grade-appropriate speech and writing</td>
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ELPT writing items measure the skills listed here.
It is important for our ELs to write.

• Written responses will give us some of the most valuable information about their language development.

  Is it language? or Is it writing?

If ELs are not able to write at this level in their own language, they will struggle more with both parts.

• Writing on ELPT measures fluency, accuracy, complexity and conventions.

• Writing on ELA assessments measures reading comprehension, development, organization, use of text-based evidence and conventions (grade-level).
ELPT Versus ELA

For ELA content assessments, there is always a research task and either a literary analysis task or a narrative writing task.

All of these come paired with passages and the expectation that the student will use the text in their response. Example (Grade 4 Practice Test):

Think about how the structural elements in the passage from “Emergency on the Mountain” differ from the structural elements in the poem “Mountains.”

Write an essay that explains the differences in the structural elements between the passage and the poem. Be sure to include specific examples from both texts to support your response.

The ELPT does not do this. There are no texts and students are expected to develop their own ideas from the prompt.
ELPT Writing Tasks

ELPT Writing tasks include:

**Storyboard**-a student is shown a set of images and asked to create a story.

**Construct a claim**-a student is asked to write an opinion about a topic and support it with personal experiences

**Respond to a Peer Email**-a student writes a response to a friend’s email

**Writing Questions**-a student is asked to write 3 questions related to a specific topic
The Storyboard item from the Sample set is just one image.

The skill of writing a story is being assessed here along with narrative organization, idea development and English conventions.
The Storyboard item is worth 5 points. Here’s a snapshot of the rubric.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
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</table>
| 5     | Responses at the 5 level are typically characterized by:  
  - The response contains a variety of syntactic structures, such as simple, compound, and complex sentences, and vocabulary that are appropriate and relevant. Word choice and grammar are effective and accurate, though the response may contain a few minor and isolated errors that do not interfere with meaning.  
  - The student addresses the topic and task very well by composing a narrative that is coherent and well developed, using relevant information and specific details. The response is well organized, using a variety of transitional words and phrases to connect events and ideas in a logical sequence.  
  - The student’s message is easily understood on a first reading. |

The entire rubric can be found in the ELPT Sample Writing Annotated Responses Document.
These kinds of activities give a student the opportunity to demonstrate a certain comfort level with English.

The main focus here is using the appropriate tone and language for the audience while also addressing the topic.
The “Respond to a Peer Email” item is worth 3 points.

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</table>
| 3     | Responses at the 3 level are typically characterized by:  
  ● The response contains vocabulary and simple, compound, and complex sentence structures that are appropriate. Word choice and grammar are accurate, though the response may contain a few noticeable errors that do not obscure the student’s meaning.  
  ● The student successfully addresses the topic and task by giving at least one suggestion. Organizational logic is clear throughout the response, and transitional words and phrases are used appropriately. |

Since this item is very informal, the focus is more on appropriateness and providing an accurate response.
These writing items are similar to ones students might see on an ELA assessment. However there is no text from which to pull evidence. Here, it is purely about logical organization, addressing the topic, and providing personal evidence.
Constructing a Claim Rubric

The “Construct a Claim” items are worth 5 points.

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| 5     | Responses at the 5 level are typically characterized by:  
  ● The response contains a variety of syntactic structures, such as simple, compound, and complex sentences, and vocabulary that are appropriate or higher. Word choice and grammar are effective and accurate, though the response may contain a few minor and isolated errors that do not interfere with meaning.  
  ● The student addresses the topic and task very well, developing an opinion and supporting it effectively with compelling reasons and examples. The response is coherent, demonstrating organizational logic and an effective use of a variety of transitional words and phrases to connect ideas.  
  ● The student’s message is easily understood on a first reading. |
The way questions are written in English is very challenging to language learners.

Simply the way we writing questions (flipping verb order, using question words, etc.,) is very English specific.

If an EL struggles with this activity, it is a good indicator that they still need specialized language instruction.
The “Writing Questions” item is worth 3 points.

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| 3     | Responses at the 3 level are typically characterized by:  
        ● The grammar and word choice are largely accurate. The response may contain isolated errors and typos that do not interfere with meaning.  
        ● The response successfully addresses the prompt and is consistent with the stimulus. |
How to Use

The *ELPT Sample Writing items* include suggestions on how to use them.

EL teachers are also encouraged to use these in collaboration with ELA teachers to gain more insight into what is an EL-specific error and what is common for any struggling writer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Use</th>
<th>Specific Guidance</th>
<th>How to Use</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think about how to prepare students for the sample writing items by examining content instructional materials and strategies.</td>
<td>Notice how the sample items are presented and what language skills are being taught.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use as a basis of comparison for other supplemental writing materials.</td>
<td>Make sure you are building the skills and knowledge necessary for students to demonstrate strong writing skills across several genres.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine the ELPT writing rubrics and use the Scoring Activity to better understand expectations for written responses.</td>
<td>Examine classroom assessments and materials and ask questions such as, “Do these support a language based approach to writing?” “How can I create additional opportunities for my students to practice these types of writing items?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate writing items into instruction and assessments.</td>
<td>Use the Scoring Activity with fellow teachers and with students to practice using ELPT Rubrics and to identify qualities of writing that meets the LA Connectors for ELs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create similar items that integrate reading, writing and language skills.</td>
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</table>
This scoring activity is at the back of the *ELPT Sample Writing Items*. These activities encourage teachers to create additional writing activities and to score them collaboratively while also establishing expectations for ELs and writing.
To help teachers and specialists use the *ELPT Sample Writing Items*, we collected student responses and included them in the *ELPT Sample Writing Items Annotated Responses*.

The responses are scored using the modified ELPT Rubrics. Scores are shown as well as explanations.

Suggestions of how to best support the student based on their responses are also included.
This is a sample response for Item 1.

**Sample Response 3**

The two boys walked into the library and checked out the books from a lady that worked at the library. After they left and read their books in the park.

**Score 3**

The response earned a score of 3 because it lacks enough development to bring it to a 4, but still addresses the topic. Sentence structure is simple, and while there is at least one transitional word (after), the sentence that follows is not fully developed.

The writing here does not reveal any obvious language development errors. Pronouns are used correctly; subjects and verbs agree, and sentences are organized according to English language conventions. However, the lack of idea development and simplistic structure are indicative of a student who is a struggling writer and would benefit from more writing specific instruction (i.e. seeing more examples of good writing, learning how to revise and develop their own writing more).
Common EL Writing Issues

To see these, we must first get ELs to write. Once we do, it is not unusual to see the following:

- Misusing/omitting articles
- Reversing adjective-noun order
- Incorrect or lack of pronoun usage
- Subject-verb agreement (tense and singular versus plural)
- Lack of prepositions
- More complicated verb tenses not used
- Lack of contractions, possessives, idioms
More Practice

Now that you are familiar with the items, use the same format to create your own items or have students create them.

- Use related images (3-5) for students to write a story
- Present other topics for which they can construct a claim (school uniforms, cell phones, speaking more than one language, later start for school—all popular topics)
- Write an email about the same topic to your teacher then to a friend
- Write questions to a character from a movie, a story, a song, or a long-dead celebrity

These are just some ideas, but do not let them limit you or your students.

Think about letting your students grade themselves or other students as well!
### ELA Guidebooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Unit: Lesson</th>
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</table>
| 1    | 6     | Out of the Dust: Lesson 23--Writing in response to an image  
Lesson 7--Create a timeline (sequence) |
| 2    | 6     | Steve Jobs: Lesson 18--Read and summarize a letter |
|      |       | If Stones Could Speak: Lesson 1--Observing images and taking notes on them  
Lesson 20--Comparing and contrasting images  
Extension Task |
| 3    | 6     | Out of the Dust: Lesson 28--Making predictions based on historical facts |
| 4    | 6     | Out of the Dust: Lesson 19--writing an argumentative essay |
| 5    | All   | Many activities throughout the Guidebooks could be converted into a question writing activity. |
| 7    |       | Written in Bone: Lesson 14 (writing about how setting and characters interact) |
| 9    |       | Fahrenheit 451: Extension Task (argumentative debate) |
| 10   |       | Rhetoric: Extension Task (argumentative presentation) |
Speaking and Listening

These items could also be converted into Speaking and Listening activities.

• Have students tell you the responses to these items.

• Have students listen to responses from other students and then ask questions.

Rubrics for Speaking items can be found the [ELPT Assessment Guide](https://example.com/ELPT-Assessment-Guide).
Next Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Dates</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now-February 2020</td>
<td>Practice writing with your ELs using these sample items and ones you create.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 3-March 13, 2020</td>
<td>Administer ELPT to all identified ELs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your time!

Send all questions to assessment@la.gov.