

Updated Information Kansas Writing Assessment

Changes are on the horizon for the Kansas summative assessment in writing. The 2015 Kansas Assessment will include field test prompts in the area of writing that will look very different from how the writing assessment has looked in the past. Below are answers to some “Frequently Asked Questions” that will hopefully bring clarity to educators about what can be expected in 2015 and beyond.

Which students will be assessed in writing?

For 2015, all students taking the ELA assessment will also be assessed in writing.

What will writing look like on the summative assessment?

For the writing portion of the Kansas summative assessment, students will engage with 2-3 related stimuli (which may be articles, narratives, reports, graphs, charts, images, diagrams, etc.) and will have the opportunity to make notes about the stimuli based on some guiding questions. In a separate test session, students will receive a prompt based on the stimuli and will participate in an on-demand writing task, to be completed in a single test session.

What will the stimuli look like?

As noted above, the stimuli may be related articles, narratives, reports, graphs, charts, images, diagrams, etc. The stimuli students engage with will focus around a central topic or idea from different disciplines, such as Science or History.

Will the performance or writing tasks from other content area assessments be used to gain a score for writing in ELA as well?

We are hoping that in the future, we will be able to do this. For example, both the History/Government and Science assessments are still in the design and pilot phase, so we will continue to work toward making this idea a reality.

What type of writing will students do?

The standards at each grade level address narrative, informative/explanatory, and opinion/argument writing. Therefore, specific types of writing will not be attached to particular grades. Students at any grade level could be asked to write any type of text.

How will students' writing be scored?

Scoring rubrics are being developed based on the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards and the 6+1-Trait® Writing Model, which is still part of the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards. Because the Standards and 6+1-Trait® Model both address expectations and descriptors for *polished* pieces of writing, special care is being taken to create rubrics that will assess what students can reasonably produce, given the time constraints for writing on the summative assessment.

Classroom teachers will review and assist in revising the rubrics in early August 2014, and the rubrics will be released to the field in September 2014.

Who will score students' writing?

CETE will use a distributed scoring model to complete the scoring. Specific details are still being worked out regarding who will score, how many responses each person will score, etc. Once these decisions are finalized, the information will be shared.

Does this mean I should only do on-demand writing in my classroom?

Absolutely not. The standards clearly state that students should engage in writing over both extended and shorter time frames. The summative assessment is merely a snapshot of a student's performance on a defined set of skills and should not be used as the sole indicator of what is or is not a valued or important academic skill.

Will students' 2015 scores on the writing assessment "count" for anything?

The writing portion of the Kansas assessment in 2015 will be a field test, intended to give CETE valuable information about the prompts, rubrics, and stimuli that can only be gathered in a real testing environment. While we expect that students and schools will also be able to gain valuable information from the writing assessment in 2015, it won't be fully operational until 2016, once data from the field test is fully analyzed and the quality of the prompts, rubrics, and stimuli can be verified.

Why is the assessment of writing going to be an on-demand writing task and not focus on process, as it has in the past?

There are several reasons for the change from a process-focused writing task to an on-demand writing task, namely time and security. When Kansas was still planning to give the Smarter Balanced Assessment, there were concerns from the field that students would be spending too much time testing. Once the decision was made to leave the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Kansas had more freedom to act on the field's request to reduce testing time. The previous week-long writing assessment did not seem feasible, given the time constraints requested by the field and the Kansas Board of Education.

Another primary consideration contributing to this decision was security. Since the writing score will now be attached to an overall ELA score, which eventually will have to be reported for accountability, and possibly also used for a portion of a teacher's evaluation, concerns were raised about whether an assessment stretching over multiple days would pass peer review. Given the more "open" testing climate of our previously-administered writing assessment, it was unlikely that it would have passed peer review.

Do I still need to focus on the writing process?

Yes. The writing standards include the writing process, and students should regularly engage in writing tasks that allow them time to fully engage in a process of planning, drafting, revising, and polishing pieces of writing.

What about 6+1-Trait® Writing?

The 6+1-Trait® Writing Model is part of the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards, so educators should still be using the language of the Model in their instruction. Likewise, as mentioned above, the scoring rubrics for the summative writing task will include some language from the Model as well. Educators are encouraged to continue to use 6+1-Trait® rubrics to score classroom writing tasks as well. However, the scoring rubrics for the summative assessment will not look like the 6+1-Trait® rubrics used for the writing assessment in the past, due primarily to concerns about the time constraints and the reasonability of students being able to adequately demonstrate all the traits within a piece of writing produced in a single

testing session. Incidentally, new rubrics for 6+1 Trait® writing were recently released and can be found here: <http://educationnorthwest.org/traits/traits-rubrics>.

So, how can I prepare my students for the writing portion of the Kansas Assessment?

Focus on quality writing instruction. Design writing tasks and instruction focused on the writing standards and literacy standards. Have students write daily, in response to both verbal and nonverbal texts. Engage students in short writing tasks as well as tasks that require them to fully engage in a writing process that spans many days. Use the 6+1-Trait® Model in conversations with students about their own writing as well as the writing of others. Ensure that writing instruction occurs throughout the school day, in multiple contexts and for multiple reasons.

What if I still have questions?

Please contact Suzy Myers-Oertel at soertel@ksde.org if you have further questions about the writing portion of the Kansas Assessment.