

NJSLA Research Simulation Task

Grade 8 Writing

Lesson 8: Writing Advanced-Proficient Prose Constructed Responses

Rationale

- ✚ To achieve the highest score on the Research Simulation Task prose constructed response, students need to demonstrate advanced-proficiency, including “comprehensive development of the claim by using clear and convincing reasoning, details, text-based evidence, and/or description” (NJSLA PCR rubric) This lesson teaches students to identify and add these elements to their writing.

Goal

- ✚ To revise essays to include advanced-proficient elements

Task Foci

- ✚ **CCSS W.8.1**: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- ✚ **CCSS W.8.2**: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- ✚ **CCSS W.8.4**: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- ✚ **CCSS W.8.5**: With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 8 here.)
- ✚ **CCSS W.8.7**: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- ✚ **CCSS W.8.8**: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- ✚ **CCSS W.8.9**: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- ✚ **CCSS W.8.10**: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Objectives

- ✚ Students will identify advanced-proficient elements in their prose constructed responses.

- ✚ Students will demonstrate advanced-proficiency by improving clarity, organization, and argument

Materials

- ✚ Student Essays from Lesson 7 (saved as Word files or printed out)
- ✚ Computer with Microsoft Word (per student)
 - Note: Since NJSLA is a computer-based test, it would be best if students can practice typing their essays rather than writing them by hand.
- ✚ Text Set handout
- ✚ Prompt handout
- ✚ Transitional Words handout
- ✚ Colored pencils (if done on paper)

Preparation

- ✚ If using computers for this lesson, students need to know how to use the highlighter in Microsoft Word. It is located in the font section of the Home toolbar next to font color. To change the highlighter color, click the arrow next to the icon, and then click on the color you want. Hold left-click and drag your cursor over the words you want to highlight. Release left-click to apply highlighter.
- ✚ The alternative is to have students print out their essays and use colored pencils to identify their essay's advanced-proficient elements.

Procedures

- ✚ Tell students that today they are going to return to their essays they wrote in the previous lesson and identify advanced-proficient elements. Then they are going to revise their essays.
- ✚ Have students open their saved essays.
- ✚ Ask the question, **“What makes an essay advanced-proficient?”**
- ✚ NJSLA looks for elements in a student essay that demonstrate excellent written expression.
- ✚ Highlighter/Colored pencils (colors are arbitrary, but everyone should use the same color to identify the same element). Explain a color and then give students time to mark their essays before moving to the next color. Circulate while they do so.
 - Yellow—Thesis statement, topic sentences (pencil: underline)
 - Light Blue—Textual evidence, whether quotations, paraphrase, or facts/data (pencil: underline)
 - Pink—Tier II words (pencil: circle)
 - Light Green—higher-order transition words (pencil: draw a box)
- ✚ After students have highlighted, ask them what they discovered was missing or lacking in their essays.
- ✚ Next, guide your students through each color.
- ✚ Yellow: Every paper needs a thesis statement in the introduction. It doesn't necessarily have to be the last sentence of the paragraph, but the introduction should contain a logical progression from opening statement to thesis statement. Similarly, every body paragraph must have a topic sentence. The first sentence (or two) of each body paragraph should be highlighted in yellow.
 - Have students read their thesis statements and topic sentences. Each topic sentence should support the thesis.
 - Have students re-read their body paragraphs and consider whether each paragraph stays focused on the topic sentence.
- ✚ Give students a few minutes to make any revisions.

- ✚ Blue: Explain that each body paragraph must have some blue highlighting. If any paragraph is missing blue, then the main idea of that paragraph hasn't been backed up by textual evidence.
- ✚ Give students a few minutes to make any revisions, referring back to their outlines, notes, etc. if needed.
- ✚ Pink: Tell students they are going to examine the language of their essays and see if their word choice can be improved. They will be looking at Tier II words:

“Tier two words (what the Standards refer to as general academic words) are far more likely to appear in written texts than in speech. They appear in all sorts of texts: informational texts (words such as relative, vary, formulate, specificity, and accumulate), technical texts (calibrate, itemize, periphery), and literary texts (misfortune, dignified, faltered, unabashedly). Tier Two words often represent subtle or precise ways to say relatively simple things—saunter instead of walk, for example. Because Tier Two words are found across many types of texts, they are highly generalizable.” (CCSS Appendix A)

- First, have students look at the words and phrases they've highlighted in pink. Ask them to really think about their word choice. Are any of the highlighted adjectives and adverbs too general? Can they change them to more specific descriptive words or more colorful synonyms? Do any of their descriptive words confuse or otherwise misrepresent what they are trying to say?
- Second, have students think about where they can add Tier II words. Where would these additions help clarify the ideas?
- ✚ Light Green: Hand out the Transitional Words and Phrases chart. Explain higher-order transition words (e.g. further, however, first, finally, therefore, for example, etc.). Higher-order transition words and phrases indicate the relationship between ideas through time, comparison/contrast, consequence, priority, etc.
 - First, have students evaluate what they highlighted. How do these transitions show relationships between ideas? Are any of them unclear? Could a different word or phrase indicate the relationship more accurately?
 - Second, have students think about where they can add transitions. Where would adding a transition help clarify the ideas?
- ✚ Give students a few more minutes to go through their papers and make further revisions with the four aspects covered in this lesson.
- ✚ Lastly, ask students to proofread their essays, checking for any errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- ✚ Have students save their highlighted drafts. Have students print in color if permissible, so you have a copy of their edits. If not, have them make a copy of the file, remove the highlighting, and print in black and white. (To un-highlight, select all the text and click “no color” in the highlighter tool.
- ✚ Have students print their work and collect.

Assessment

- ✚ Students' writing should demonstrate successfully incorporated advanced-proficient elements.
- ✚ Check which students are struggling to organize their ideas and incorporate evidence into their papers, and note which advanced-proficient elements they're missing.

Transitional Words and Phrases

This table provides examples of some transitional words and phrases and when to use them. The examples below are by no means all of the transitional words in English. What others can you think of?

To show similarity or addition	Also, additionally, equally, further, in addition, likewise, similarly, too
To show difference or contrast	Although, another, besides, by comparison, conversely, even though, however, in comparison, instead, neither, nevertheless, on the other hand, otherwise, yet
To show cause or consequence	As, because, consequently, finally, hence, since, so, then, therefore, thus
To show chronology or sequence	After, at the same time, before, during, earlier, finally, first, later, meanwhile, next, second, then, third, until, while, yet
To show priority or importance	Above all, also, besides, firstly, further, furthermore, next, secondly, thirdly
To show an example or summary	For example, for instance, in conclusion, in other words, in short