

Writing Assessment Framework (PSAE Grade 11)

Illinois State Board of Education

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Introduction to the Illinois Writing Assessment Framework

PSAE Grade 11

The Illinois Writing Assessment Framework for PSAE Grade 11 is designed to assist educators, test developers, policy makers, and the public by clearly defining those elements of the Illinois Learning Standards that are assessed by the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE).

The Writing Assessment Framework provides the following:

- **Clarity** for students, parents, and teachers regarding the knowledge and skills that are measurable on Illinois' large-scale state assessments;
- **Focus** on core content, without encouraging excessive narrowing of curriculum or instruction; and
- **Thorough coverage** of the subject domain as it will be assessed, as opposed to just providing sample benchmarks.

The Writing Assessment Framework provides the specifications for the content of the PSAE. Students who are competent in the knowledge and skills outlined within the Framework should perform better than students who are not. As both the current and future assessments are designed to measure the Illinois Learning Standards, using the Writing Assessment Framework in curriculum and instructional design will provide valuable guidance to educators and students.

Assessment Objectives

The Writing Assessment Framework is presented through a list of assessment objectives, which are clear and concise statements of testable material. Each assessment objective was derived from the Illinois Learning Standards and Benchmarks, and in some cases the Performance Descriptors (www.isbe.net/ils). Due to practical limitations, each year's assessment will measure a sample of the content in the Writing Assessment Framework. Each year's assessment will sample a different subset of the content, and there will be sufficient overlap from year to year to allow annual comparisons.

Writing Assessment Structure

The writing portion of the PSAE is comprised of two components: the ACT English Test on Day 1 and the ACT Writing Test also on Day 1. Each component contributes 50% to the total PSAE Writing scale score.

Content Emphasis and Reports

While the precise content on each year's assessment will vary slightly from year to year, the relative emphasis on the different categories and subcategories of content will not. The proportion of each year's assessment devoted to each of the categories of assessment objectives is clearly specified in the Writing Content Category Table. In addition to an overall PSAE Writing score, ACT English Test and ACT Writing Test scores, and a combined ACT Writing score, as much information as possible will be reported.

Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive complexity refers to the level of reasoning called for by an assessment objective. For example, some assessment objectives require simple recall, while others may require more complex levels of reasoning and/or application of knowledge and skills. The cognitive complexity called for by each assessment objective is implicit within the objective. The Writing Assessment Framework is designed to ensure that a substantial proportion of the assessment addresses higher-level cognitive skills.

Framework Conventions

This document uses a number of conventions, including symbols, abbreviations and a general organizational structure designed for ease of use.

The following conventions are used throughout the Writing Assessment Framework:

- *Numbering of Assessment Objectives*

Each writing assessment objective has a unique identifier with three components.

Example: 3.11.01

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| 3 | 11 | 01 |
| <i>State Learning Goal</i> | <i>Grade</i> | <i>Objective Number</i> |

The first component, “3,” indicates the numbered State Learning Goal as defined in the Illinois Learning Standards. The second component, “11,” indicates the grade level. The third component, “01,” indicates that this is the first assessment objective for this goal at this grade level.

Conclusion

The Writing Assessment Framework for grade 11 describes the student knowledge, skills, and abilities that may be assessed on the PSAE. The Framework provides an informative documentation of the test design and construction criteria. The Illinois State Board of Education intends this document to be of assistance to educators, test developers, policy makers and the public.

Excerpt from *Illinois Learning Standards*¹

The *Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts* goals and standards were developed using the 1985 State Goals for Language Arts, various state and national standards drafts, and local education standards contributed by team members. Through the achievement of these goals and standards, students will gain proficiency in the language skills that are basic to all learning, critical to success in the workplace and essential to life as productive citizens.

English language arts includes reading, writing, speaking, listening and the study of literature. In addition, students must be able to study, retain and use information from many sources. Through the study of the English language arts, students should be able to read fluently, understanding a broad range of written materials. They must be able to communicate well and listen carefully and effectively. They should develop a command of the language and demonstrate their knowledge through speaking and writing for a variety of audiences and purposes. As students progress, a structured study of literature will allow them to recognize universal themes and to compare styles and ideas across authors and eras.

APPLICATIONS OF LEARNING

Through Applications of Learning, students demonstrate and deepen their understanding of basic knowledge and skills. These applied learning skills cross academic disciplines and reinforce the important learning of the disciplines. The ability to use these skills will greatly influence students' success in school, in the workplace and in the community.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

Recognize and investigate problems; formulate and propose solutions supported by reason and evidence.

Solving problems demands that students be able to read and listen, comprehend ideas, ask and answer questions, clearly convey their own ideas through written and oral means, and explain their reasoning. Comprehending reading materials and editing and revising writing are in themselves forms of complex problem solving. The ability to locate, acquire and organize information from various sources, print and electronic, is essential to solving problems involving research. In all fields—English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and others, the command of language is essential in stating and reasoning through problems and conveying results.

COMMUNICATING

Express and interpret information and ideas.

Communication is the essence of English language arts, and communication surrounds us today in many forms. Individuals and groups of people exchange ideas and information—oral and written—at lunch tables, through newspapers and magazines, and through radio, television and on-line computer services. From the simplest, shortest conversations to the most complex technical manuals, language is the basis of all human communication. A strong command of reading, writing, speaking and listening is vital for communicating in the home, school, workplace, and beyond.

¹ Illinois State Board of Education (1997). *Illinois Learning Standards*

USING TECHNOLOGY

Use appropriate instruments, electronic equipment, computers and networks to access information, process ideas and communicate results.

Computers and telecommunications have become basic means for creating messages and relaying information. In offices and homes, people write using word processors. Audio and visual media are used for both creative and practical forms of communication. The use of on-line services is now commonplace among researchers, authors, farmers and auto mechanics. Skilled use of these technologies provides students with necessary opportunities to search and process information, be in touch with experts, prepare documents, and learn and communicate in new, more effective ways.

WORKING ON TEAMS

Learn and contribute productively as individuals and as members of groups.

In sports, the workplace, family and elsewhere, teamwork requires skill in the use of language. People must speak clearly and listen well as they share ideas, plans, instructions and evaluations. In researching and bringing outside information to a team, individuals must be able to search, select and understand a variety of sources. Documenting progress and reporting results demand the ability to organize information and convey it clearly. Those who can read, write, speak and listen well are valuable contributors in any setting where people are working together to achieve shared goals.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Recognize and apply connections of important information and ideas within and among learning areas.

The parts of English language arts are closely interconnected. Reading and writing provide the means to receive and send written messages. Likewise, listening and speaking enable people to receive and send oral information. Speaking and writing are the creative components, while listening and reading are the receptive components of language through which people access knowledge and demonstrate its applications. Proficiency in these skills clearly supports learning in all academic areas.

STATE GOAL 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Why this goal is important: The ability to write clearly is essential to any person's effective communication. Students with high-level writing skills can produce documents that show planning and organization, and effectively convey the intended message and meaning. Clear writing is critical to employment and production in today's world. Individuals must be capable of writing for a variety of audiences in differing styles, including standard rhetorical themes, business letters and reports, financial proposals, and technical and professional communications. Students should be able to use technology to enhance their writing proficiency and to improve their career opportunities.

STANDARD 3A

Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and structure.

STANDARD 3B

Compose well organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences.

STANDARD 3C

Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.

Writing Content Category Table
(PSAE Grade 11)

| | Day 1 ACT English Test | Day 1 ACT Writing Test |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Goal 3 – Writing | 100% | 100% |
| Grammar, Sentence Structure, and Punctuation (Standard A) | 52% | 0% |
| Grammar and Sentence Structure | 38% | 0% |
| Punctuation | 14% | 0% |
| Composition | 48% | 100% |
| Organization and Paragraphs (Standard B) | 48% | 0% |
| Writing Prompt (Standards B/C) | 0% | 100% |

Note: The writing portion of the PSAE is a combination of the ACT English component and the ACT Writing component. Each component contributes 50% to the total PSAE Writing scale score.

Goal 3 – Writing

Grade 11

GRAMMAR, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, AND PUNCTUATION (STANDARD A)

Grammar and Sentence Structure

- 3.11.01** Recognize correct subject verb agreement.
- 3.11.02** Recognize appropriate use of subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns.
- 3.11.03** Edit sentences to create or maintain parallelism between phrases.
- 3.11.04** Select prepositions and pronouns precisely and in keeping with established idioms (e.g., going *to* the store, rather than going *at* the store).
- 3.11.05** Recognize subject verb agreement in sentences with collective nouns and indefinite pronouns as subjects.
- 3.11.06** Recognize the distinctions between adjective and adverbial forms of words and when each is appropriate for a given context (e.g., With a dreamy—*not* “*dreamily*”—look in his eye, he made a wish.)
- 3.11.07** Recognize the correct form of regular and irregular verbs including how they should be formed in different tenses (e.g., The book should have—*not* “*of*”—been returned by now.)
- 3.11.08** Recognize the proper form of possessive pronouns, and distinguish them from adverbs and contractions (e.g., They need their—*not* “*there*”—buckets to play in the sand. The movie has a charm all its—*not* “*it’s*”—own.)
- 3.11.09** Recognize the proper case of a pronoun in a given context (e.g., She—*not* “*Her*”—and I went to the math contest.)
- 3.11.10** Recognize the correct form of words used to create a comparison (e.g., They are the fastest—*not* “*most fastest*”—swimmers.)
- 3.11.11** Recognize the idioms of standard written English (e.g., I felt as if I had walked a mile in his shoes. You won’t get away with that easily.)
- 3.11.12** Avoid run-on sentences, fused sentences, comma splices, and sentence fragments.
- 3.11.13** Recognize sentences in which modifiers are properly placed in order to avoid ambiguity or confusion (e.g., They thought the room filled with flowers was lovely. *Not:* Filled with flowers, they thought the room was lovely.)
- 3.11.14** Maintain consistency of person within a sentence and between sentences (e.g., You may spend the time riding your bike or jogging around the track. You—*not* “*One*”—may also lift weights.)
- 3.11.15** Maintain consistency of voice within a sentence.
- 3.11.16** Maintain the proper verb tense within a sentence and between sentences.
- 3.11.17** Recognize the mood in which a verb should be placed to create a coherent sentence (e.g., They told Mr. Liu that his car had been fixed and he can—*not* “*were to*”—pick it up at the garage.)
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Goal 3 – Writing

Grade 11

GRAMMAR, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, AND PUNCTUATION (STANDARD A) Continued

Punctuation

3.11.18 Recognize when commas are needed to set off independent modifiers.

3.11.19 Recognize when semicolons are needed and/or effective between two closely related clauses.

3.11.20 Identify and omit misplaced commas, colons, dashes, and semi-colons.

3.11.21 Recognize whether the end of a sentence should be punctuated with a period, question mark, or exclamation point.

3.11.22 Recognize the correct use of apostrophes.

3.11.23 Recognize when information within a sentence should be identified, through punctuation, as parenthetical and how to identify it as such with the correct use of commas, dashes, or parentheses.

3.11.24 Understand how to use punctuation to avoid ambiguity in a sentence (e.g., The boys say the girls are talented. The boys, say the girls, are talented.)

3.11.25 Recognize the correct way to punctuate items or simple phrases in a series.

3.11.26 Recognize the correct way to use punctuation to indicate restrictive or nonrestrictive clauses.

Goal 3 – Writing

Grade 11

COMPOSITION

Organization and Paragraphs (Standard B)

3.11.27 Recognize and eliminate wordiness or redundancy.

3.11.28 Recognize the best order of words in a sentence or of sentences in a paragraph to maintain or establish clarity and coherence.

3.11.29 Recognize the word or phrase that creates the most logical and effective transition between parts of a sentence, between sentences, or between paragraphs.

3.11.30 Identify the best sentence to be added to a paragraph (e.g., a sentence, from a list, that adds something significant and relevant to a paragraph).

3.11.31 Decide the best place to divide one paragraph into two paragraphs to create coherent paragraphs, each with a distinct focus, mood, or other specified purpose.

3.11.32 Identify additional information most relevant to a paragraph (e.g., information, from a list, that adds something to a paragraph).

3.11.33 Recognize the best analysis of the effect of removing specified words or phrases from sentences or of removing specified words, phrases, or sentences from paragraphs.

3.11.34 Recognize words that maintain the style and tone of a paragraph or essay (e.g., avoiding words that are too formal, casual, old-fashioned, academic, technical for an established context).

3.11.35 Select words that establish or maintain clarity rather than words that result in mixed metaphors or other nonsensical or confusing statements.

Writing Prompt (Standards B/C)

The following will be assessed:

3.11.36 Persuasive Writing: Take a position on the question stated in the prompt. Write about one of the two points given or present a different point of view. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
