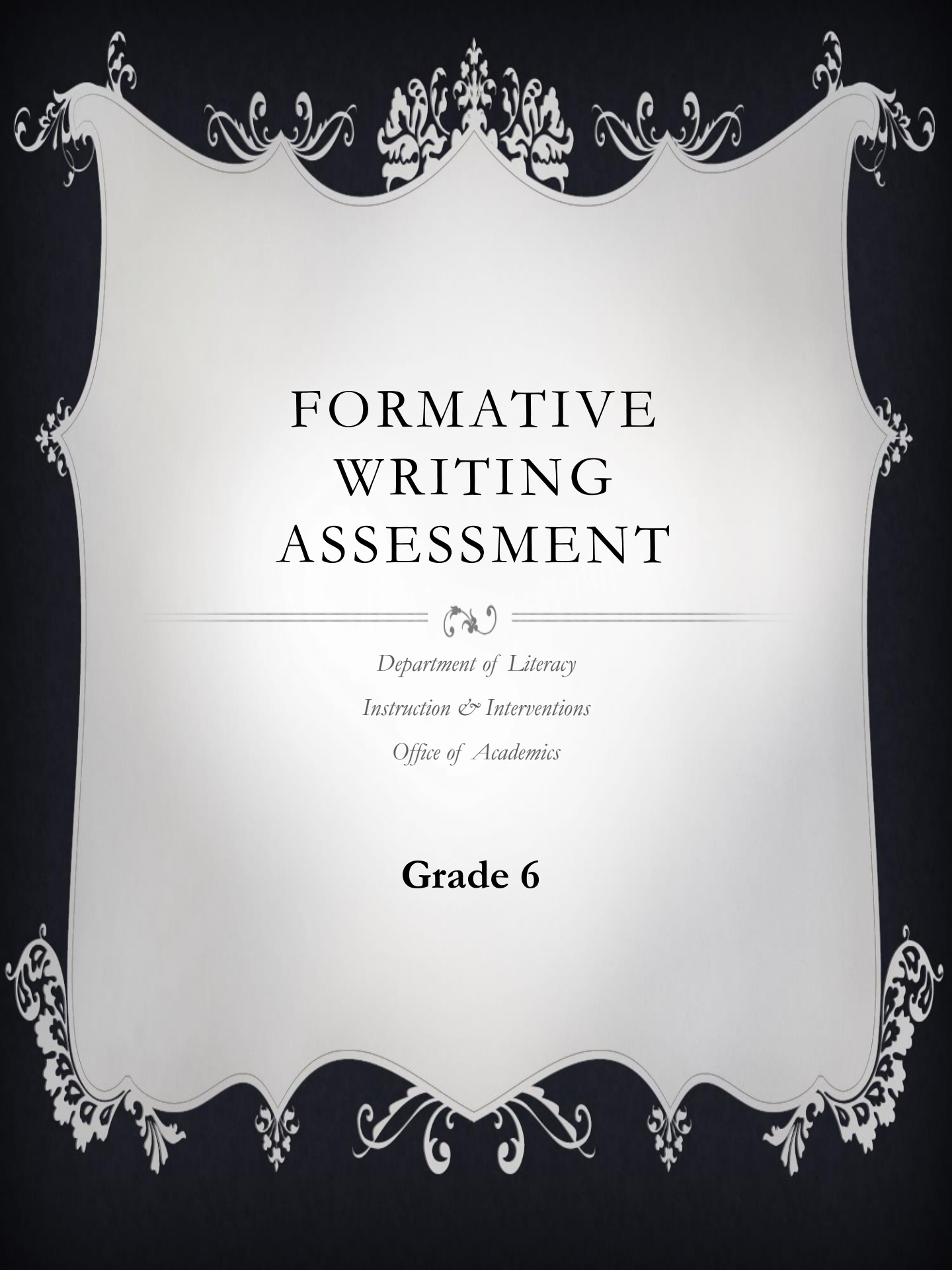




FORMATIVE WRITING ASSESSMENT

Department of Literacy
Instruction & Interventions
Office of Academics

Grade 6

Text-Based Writing Prompts:

Administration and Scoring Guidelines

Teacher Directions:

Students will read a stimulus about a single topic. A stimulus consists of several texts written on a single topic. The stimulus may include informational or literary fiction or nonfiction texts and can cover a wide array of topics. After reading the stimulus, the students will respond to a writing prompt in which they will provide information on a topic, develop a narrative, or take a stance to support an opinion or argument. Students will be required to synthesize information from the text sets and must cite specific evidence from the texts to support their ideas. Students' informative/explanatory responses should demonstrate a developed and supported controlling idea. Students' opinion/argumentative responses should support an opinion/argument using ideas presented in the stimulus. Students will have 90 minutes to read the passages, and plan, write, revise and edit their essay. **Students should read the prompt first.** They should be encouraged to highlight, underline, and take notes to support the planning process.

Scoring:

The attached text-based rubric should be used to score student responses. While the total possible points on the rubric is ten, it is recommended that three individual scores be given—one score for each of the three domains on the rubric. This will allow the teacher to determine specific areas of need within individual student responses, thus allowing for differentiation in the writing instruction that follows these formative writing tasks. The three domains are: Purpose, Focus, Organization (PFO), Evidence and Elaboration (EE), and Conventions of Standard English (CSE). Teachers should score **holistically** within each domain—PFO (4-points), EE (4-points), and CSE (2-points).

Each level of scoring within a domain is based on the overarching statement for the score found in the rubric. For example, on the grades 6-11 rubric for argumentation, the overarching statement for a score of 4 in the Purpose, Focus, Organization domain is, "The response is fully sustained and consistently focused within the purpose, audience, and task; and it has a clear and effective organizational structure creating coherence and completeness." The bulleted points that follow the statement must be considered as factors in the scoring, but should not be utilized as a checklist. Most, but not all, of the bulleted points will be evident in the student writing for a score at a specific level.

Teachers should keep in mind that a score of 3 on the rubric for a domain signals student proficiency in the addressed writing standard with a score of 4 representing mastery. In the CSE domain, a score of two represents student proficiency in the standard.

Sixth Grade: Argumentative Prompt #1

Write an argumentative essay explaining why you agree or disagree with the idea that animals can learn and use language. Support your claim with details from what you have read.

Manage your time carefully so that you can:

- Read the passages
- Plan your essay
- Write your essay
- Revise and edit your essay

Be sure to:

- Include a claim
- Address counterclaims
- Use evidence from multiple sources
- Avoid overly relying on one source

Your written response should be in the form of a multi-paragraph essay. Remember to spend time reading, planning, writing, revising, and editing.

Part 1: Read Sources

Source 1: Magazine Article

Speaking BONOBO

by Paul Raffaele



As your eAd Look for evidence that supports your position—or convinces you to change your position on this question: *Can animals learn or use language?*

notes

smithsonian magazine, november 2006

To better understand bonobo intelligence, I traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, to meet Kanzi, a 26-year-old male bonobo reputedly able to converse with humans. When Kanzi was an infant, American psychologist Sue Savage-Rumbaugh tried to teach his mother, Matata, to communicate using a keyboard labeled with geometric symbols. Matata never really got the hang of it, but Kanzi—who usually played in the background, seemingly oblivious, during his mother’s teaching sessions—picked up the language.

- 10 Savage-Rumbaugh and her colleagues kept adding symbols to Kanzi’s keyboard and laminated sheets of paper. First Kanzi used 6 symbols, then 18, finally 348. The symbols refer to familiar objects (yogurt, key, tummy, bowl), favored activities (chase, tickle), and even some concepts considered fairly abstract (now, bad).

- Kanzi learned to combine these symbols in regular ways, or in what linguists call “proto-grammar.” Once, Savage-Rumbaugh says, on an outing in a forest by the Georgia State University laboratory where he was raised, Kanzi touched the
20 symbols for “marshmallow” and “fire.” Given matches and marshmallows, Kanzi snapped twigs for a fire, lit them with the matches and toasted the marshmallows on a stick.

Savage-Rumbaugh claims that in addition to the symbols Kanzi uses, he knows the meaning of up to 3,000 spoken English words. She tests his comprehension in part by having someone in another room pronounce words that Kanzi hears through a set of headphones. Kanzi then points to the appropriate symbol on his keyboard. But Savage-Rumbaugh says Kanzi also understands words that aren't a part of his
30 keyboard vocabulary; she says he can respond appropriately to commands such as "put the soap in the water" or "carry the TV outdoors."

About a year ago, Kanzi and his sister, mother, nephew and four other bonobos moved into a \$10 million, 18-room house and laboratory complex at the Great Ape Trust, North America's largest great ape sanctuary, five miles from downtown Des Moines. The bonobo compound boasts a 13,000-square-foot lab, drinking fountains, outdoor playgrounds, rooms linked by hydraulic doors that the animals
40 operate themselves by pushing buttons, and a kitchen where they can use a microwave oven and get snacks from a vending machine (pressing the symbols for desired foods).

Kanzi and the other bonobos spend evenings sprawled on the floor, snacking on M & M's, blueberries, onions and celery, as they watch DVDs they select by pressing buttons on a computer screen. Their favorites star apes and other creatures friendly with humans such as *Quest for Fire*, *Every Which Way But Loose*, *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan* and *Babe*.

Through a glass panel, Savage-Rumbaugh asks Kanzi if it's
50 OK for me to enter his enclosure. "The bonobos control who comes into their quarters," she explains. Kanzi, still the alpha male of this group in his middle age, has the mien¹ of an aging

¹ **mien** bearing or manner, especially as it reveals an inner state of mind

notes

patriarch—he's balding and paunchy with serious, deep-set eyes. Squealing apparent agreement, he pushes a button, and I walk inside. A wire barrier still separates us. "Kanzi can cause you serious damage if he wants," Savage-Rumbaugh adds.

Kanzi shows me his electronic lexigram touch pad, which is connected to a computer that displays—while a male voice speaks—the words he selects. But Kanzi's finger slips off
60 the keys. "We're trying to solve this problem," says Savage-Rumbaugh.

She and her colleagues have been testing the bonobos' ability to express their thoughts vocally, rather than by pushing buttons. In one experiment she described to me, she placed Kanzi and Panbanisha, his sister, in separate rooms where they could hear but not see each other. Through lexigrams, Savage-Rumbaugh explained to Kanzi that he would be given yogurt. He was then asked to communicate this information to Panbanisha. "Kanzi vocalized, then Panbanisha vocalized in
70 return and selected 'yogurt' on the keyboard in front of her," Savage-Rumbaugh tells me.

With these and other ape-language experiments, says Savage-Rumbaugh, "the mythology of human uniqueness is coming under challenge. If apes can learn language, which we once thought unique to humans, then it suggests that ability is not innate in just us."

But many linguists² argue that these bonobos are simply very skilled at getting what they want, and that their abilities do not constitute language. "I do not believe that there has
80 ever been an example anywhere of a nonhuman expressing an opinion, or asking a question. Not ever," says Geoffrey Pullum, a linguist at the University of California at Santa Cruz. "It would be wonderful if animals could say things about the world, as opposed to just signaling a direct emotional state or need. But they just don't."

² **linguist** an expert who studies the nature and structure of many languages, and the variations among them

Whatever the dimension of Kanzi's abilities, he and I did manage to communicate. I'd told Savage-Rumbaugh about some of my adventures, and she invited me to perform a Maori war dance. I beat my chest, slapped my thighs and hollered.

- 90 The bonobos sat quiet and motionless for a few seconds, then all but Kanzi snapped into a frenzy, the noise deafening as they screamed, bared their teeth and pounded on the walls and floor of their enclosure. Still calm, Kanzi waved an arm at Savage-Rumbaugh, as if asking her to come closer, then let loose with a stream of squeaks and squeals. "Kanzi says he knows you're not threatening them," Savage-Rumbaugh said to me," and he'd like you to do it again just for him, in a room out back, so the others won't get upset."

- I'm skeptical, but I follow the researcher through the
10. complex, out of Kanzi's sight. I find him, all alone, standing behind protective bars. Seeing me, he slapped his chest and thighs, mimicking my war dance, as if inviting me to perform an encore. I obliged, of course, and Kanzi joined in with gusto.

notes

Source 2: Magazine Article

When Animals Communicate, They Are Not Using “Language”

by Mia Lewis

As your eAd Pay attention to the evidence the author presents. Jot down comments or questions about the text in the side margins.

notes

Over the years, a number of research studies have shown that it is possible to teach an animal to communicate using sign language or specially designed computer keyboards. Bonobos or other primates raised in captivity and trained from birth may over the course of many years learn signs or symbols representing hundreds of words. They may even be able to string a couple of them together to make basic phrases. Dogs, and even birds, can be trained to recognize and respond to many words and signals.

- 10 But does any of this constitute the ability to use language? Many linguists, zoologists, and other scientists say no. They believe that the ability to use language is unique to humans. We have something in our brains that enables us to learn and use language in a way that animals never can.

- Skeptical scientists insist that when chimpanzees or other animals are taught to use words or signs, more often than not they are simply performing a kind of trick in order to receive a reward—usually food. That is why the animals do not then go on to create more words of their own, or string them together
20 into complex sentences. A human baby, on the other hand, rapidly progresses from saying single words to being able to form complex sentences.

One famous linguist compares the animals that participate in human language studies to Olympic athletes. “Humans can

fly about 30 feet—that’s what they do in the Olympics,” Noam Chomsky said in an interview. In other words, just because you can train a gymnast to fly through the air, that does not mean humans can fly. Likewise, the chimps in these studies aren’t really using language, and the studies don’t tell us anything
30 about actual animal communication. “If higher apes were incapable of anything beyond the trivialities that have been shown in these experiments, they would have been extinct millions of years ago,” Dr. Chomsky said.

Of course animals communicate with each other using various means—sounds, signals, even smells and vibrations. And as research technologies improve, scientists discover more and more about the complexity and sophistication of these communications. But all the same, those communication methods are not the same as language. They lack one or more
40 of the many attributes that make up human language, such as the following:

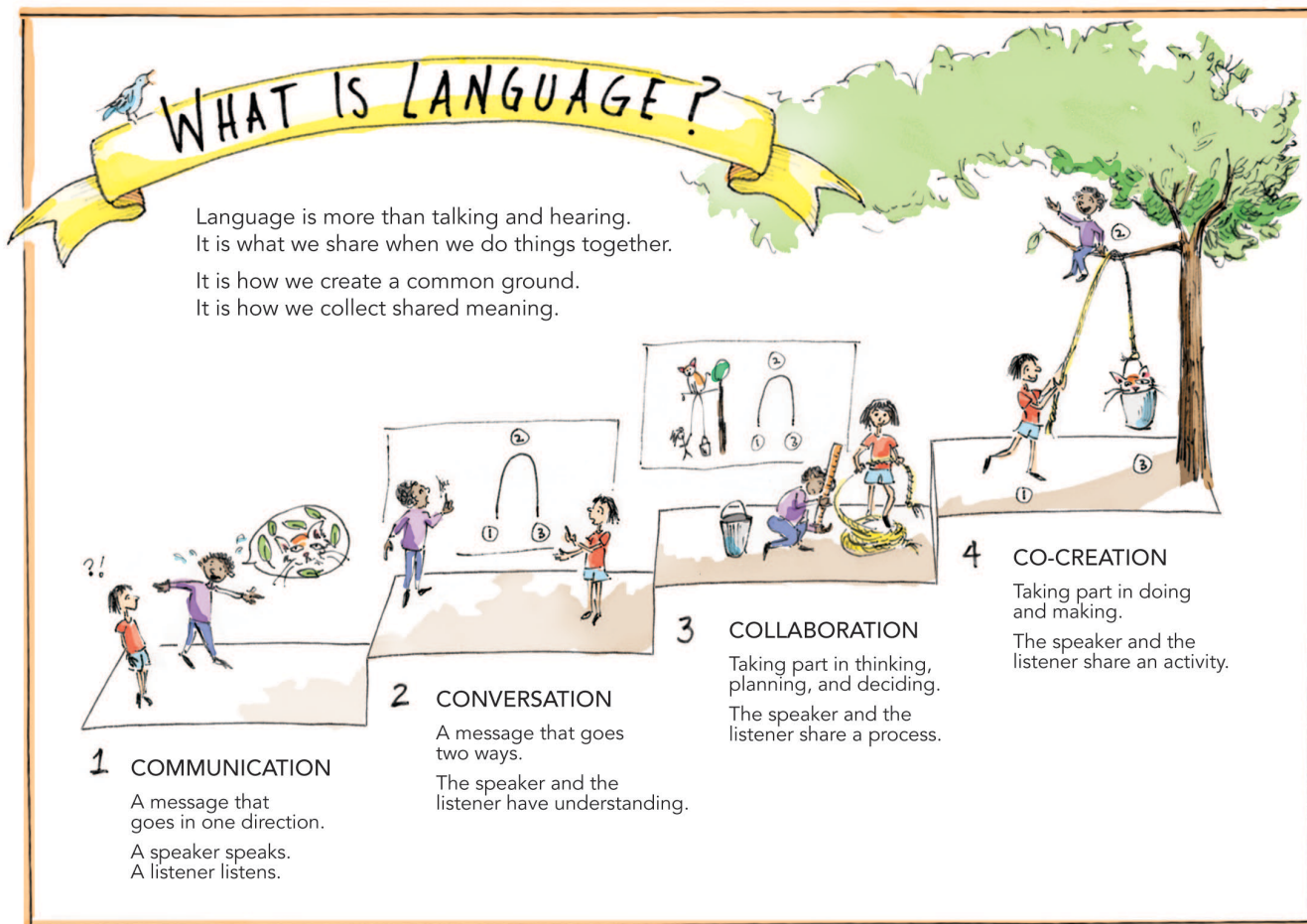
- Displacement: the ability to communicate ideas about things not present in time or space;

- Discreteness: discrete units of sound being combined to make up meaning;

- Productivity: the ability to combine the words in a language to produce an infinite number of meanings.

Even if it isn’t “language,” the natural communication in animal species is more interesting and important to study
50 than the tricks they can be taught. After all, what chimpanzees communicate to each other in the wild—without language—must go far beyond the 200-300 words they can be taught in a laboratory setting.

Source 3: Graphic Feature



Grades 6–11 Argumentation Text-based Writing Rubric (Score points within each domain include most of the characteristics below.)			
Score	Purpose, Focus, and Organization (4-point Rubric)	Evidence and Elaboration (4-point Rubric)	Conventions of Standard English (2-point Rubric begins at score point 2)
4	The response is fully sustained and consistently focused within the purpose, audience, and task; and it has a clear and effective organizational structure creating coherence and completeness. The response includes most of the following: - Clearly stated and strongly maintained claim with little or no loosely related material - Clearly addressed alternate or opposing claims* - Skillful use of a variety of transitional strategies to clarify the relationships between and among ideas - Logical progression of ideas from beginning to end with a satisfying introduction and conclusion - Established and maintained appropriate style and objective tone	The response provides thorough, convincing, and credible support/evidence for the writer’s claim that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details. The response includes most of the following: - Smoothly integrated, thorough, and relevant evidence, including precise references to sources - Effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques to support the claim, demonstrating an understanding of the topic and text - Clear and effective expression of ideas, using precise language - Academic and domain-specific vocabulary clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose - Various sentence structures creating language facility	
3	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused within the purpose, audience, and task; and it has evident organizational structure with a sense of completeness. The response includes most of the following: - Clear and maintained claim, though some loosely related material may be present - Alternate or opposing claims included but may not be completely addressed* - Adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety to clarify the relationships between and among ideas - Adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end with a sufficient introduction and conclusion - Appropriate style and objective tone established	The response provides adequate support/evidence for the writer’s claim that includes the use of sources, facts, and details. The response includes most of the following: - Generally integrated and relevant evidence from sources, though references may be general or imprecise - Adequate use of some elaborative techniques - Adequate expression of ideas, employing a mix of precise and general language - Domain-specific vocabulary generally appropriate for the audience and purpose - Some variation in sentence structure	
<i>Continued on the following page</i>			

DRAFT ELA Text-based Writing Rubrics, Grades 6–11: Argumentation
Florida Standards Assessments

Score	Purpose, Focus, and Organization (4-point Rubric)	Evidence and Elaboration (4-point Rubric)	Conventions of Standard English (2-point Rubric)
2	The response is somewhat sustained within the purpose, audience, and task but may include loosely related or extraneous material; and it may have an inconsistent organizational structure. The response may include the following: • Focused on a claim but insufficiently sustained or unclear • May not sufficiently address alternate or opposing claims* • Inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • Uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end with an inadequate introduction or conclusion	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the writer’s claim that includes partial use of sources, facts, and details. The response may include the following: • Weakly integrated evidence from sources and erratic or irrelevant references • Repetitive or ineffective use of elaborative techniques • Imprecise or simplistic expression of ideas • Some use of inappropriate domain-specific vocabulary • Most sentences limited to simple constructions	The response demonstrates an adequate command of basic conventions. The response may include the following: • Some minor errors in usage but no patterns of errors • Adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, sentence formation, and spelling
1	The response is related to the topic but may demonstrate little or no awareness of the purpose, audience, and task; and it may have little or no discernible organizational structure. The response may include the following: • Absent, confusing, or ambiguous claim • Missing alternate or opposing claims* • Few or no transitional strategies • Frequent extraneous ideas impeding understanding • Too brief to demonstrate knowledge of focus or organization	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the writer’s claim, including little if any use of sources, facts, and details. The response may include the following: • Minimal, absent, erroneous, or irrelevant evidence from the source material • Expression of ideas that is vague, unclear, or confusing • Limited and often inappropriate language or domain-specific vocabulary • Sentences limited to simple constructions	The response demonstrates a partial command of basic conventions. The response may include the following: • Various errors in usage • Inconsistent use of correct punctuation, capitalization, sentence formation, and spelling
0			The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions, with frequent and severe errors often obscuring meaning.

*Not applicable at grade 6