# GRADE 4 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: A CALL TO ACTION

## UNIT OVERVIEW

The argumentative writing unit for fourth grade, "Writing to Call Others to Action," endeavors to teach students that they have power through their writing. Students develop an opinion based on a topic and write from this perspective. Students learn the importance of considering their task, purpose, and audience. Students demonstrate through their writing an awareness of why they are writing their pieces and they effectively target the intended audience.

## TASK DETAILS

**Task Name:** To Test or Not to Test

**Grade:** 4

**Subject:** Literacy

**Depth of Knowledge:** 3

**Task Description:** This task requires students to analyze texts viewed and read (independently or together), and to develop and write an opinion piece for or against standardized testing. The students will then compose and publish a letter describing their stand on the testing debate and send it to the Schools Chancellor of the City of New York. The task may take between 4–5 days to complete (this includes the time for reading, viewing the videos, and discussing, planning, and writing the letter).

**Standards Assessed:**

**W.4.1.** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
c. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., *for instance*, *in order to*, *in addition*).
d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

**W.4.4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.



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**L.4.3.** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.
b. Choose punctuation for effect.
c. Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion).

**Materials Needed:**

Appleberry, Christina. "Testing and other measures of life /PRO: Standardized exams show what you've learned," *SFGate*, May 1, 2001, accessed March 11, 2013, http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/openforum/article/Testing-and-other-measures-of-life-PRO-2925789.php.

Chavous, Kevin P. "The Pressure to Perform," *The Huffington Post*, April 25, 2012, accessed March 11, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-p-chavous/the-pressure-to-perform_b_1450954.html.

Couric, Katie. "Notebook: Standardized Tests." *CBS Evening News*, October 4, 2007, accessed March 11, 2013, http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=2471025n.

"Testing: No Child Left Behind." *Where We Stand: America's Schools in the 21st Century*. Writ. Rebecca Haggerty and Molly Knight Raskin. Dir. Rebecca Haggerty. PBS, 2008. Television. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wherewestand/reports/testing-no-child-left-behind/segment-four-from-full-episode/27/.

"Is the use of standardized tests improving education in America?," http://standardizedtests.procon.org/.

"Pros and Cons of Standardized Testing," http://www.brighthubeducation.com/student-assessment-tools/16137-the-pros-and-cons-of-standardized-testing/.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The task and instructional supports in the following pages are designed to help educators understand and implement Common Core–aligned tasks that are embedded in a unit of instruction. We have learned through our pilot work that focusing instruction on units anchored in rigorous Common Core–aligned assessments drives significant shifts in curriculum and pedagogy. Callout boxes and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports are included to provide ideas around how to include multiple entry points for diverse learners.

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# GRADE 4 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: A CALL TO ACTION

## PERFORMANCE TASK



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**Writing to Call Others to Action**
Student Guidelines/Directions
**To Test or Not to Test?**

**Congratulations! Recently, you took two important exams in reading and math. Testing is something that people have strong feelings about. Some people believe that testing is very important. Others are against testing. Each group has many convincing reasons for their opinion. What do you think? The New York City Department of Education Chancellor wants to know.**

**Directions:**

You have built on your knowledge of this issue by investigating aspects of the testing debate through the viewing of two videos and through the articles that we have read together. Today you will draft a letter to the Chancellor of the Department of Education giving your opinion for or against state testing. Use your "Putting Your Notes Together" sheet as a resource to help you compose your letter. Follow these steps below to ensure you include everything:

- Review your notes and form an opinion: **Are you in favor of state testing or are you against state testing?** Take a position and introduce that position in your letter.
- Use at least two reasons for your opinion.
- Use at least one text-based fact (from the videos/articles) and one detail (i.e., an example) for **each** of your reasons.
- Make sure you include at least three linking words/phrases to connect your ideas (i.e., *for example, in order to, in addition, although, since*).
- Use your content-specific word bank to help you choose words and phrases that convey your ideas precisely.
- Make sure your letter has a conclusion that connects back to your opinion.
- Check to be sure your writing demonstrates a command of standard English (check for spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation).
- Check to be sure you organize your letter effectively (i.e., paragraphing, sections, letter format).
- Check for the "tone" of your letter (Remember your audience: you are writing to the Chancellor of New York City schools, not one of your friends).

All of your notes will also be collected and assessed, so take them thoughtfully.

This last test has been a hotbed of discussion. The Chancellor wants to know your opinion!

# 4TH GRADE
# WRITING TO CALL OTHERS TO ACTION
## Culminating Performance Task: To Test or Not To Test

***Guidelines for Task Administration – Teacher Directions***

**Administration Guidelines:** This assessment will probably take between four to five days, depending on how much time you can allocate each day and your students' stamina. The students will have the opportunity to watch and discuss two videos on test taking, read together four texts, and ultimately write an opinion piece. Each session will open with an activity which will preview the vocabulary students will encounter in the resource texts provided. Students will receive scaffolding through discussions, graphic organizers, and direct vocabulary instruction to help them prepare for the final task. The lessons that support the administration of this task can be found in the Instructional Supports section of this unit.

**Directions:** Inform students, "Now that we have completed our unit on opinion writing, this will be the final assessment. In this unit you have learned about the power you have as writers to persuade others to take action on important social issues. Your final task will be to write a letter in which you state your opinion on standardized testing."

Remind students that their writing should include their opinion and facts from texts and videos that support the reasons behind their opinions. Tell them that this performance task will help you to determine how well they are able to review resources and use these resources to help formulate an opinion (or additionally support/revise an existing opinion). They will spend four to five days on the task.

Over the first three days, students will preview daily key vocabulary and challenging concepts, view videos on the issue of standardized testing, and discuss four articles that you will read to them. They will take notes on these resources.

Afterwards, they will use their notes to help them form an opinion about whether they are in support of standardized testing or against standardized testing. Ultimately, they may use their notes and resources to help them draft and write a letter that includes their opinion and the reasons for their opinion, supported by the facts and details they have collected.

TELL STUDENTS TO WRITE THEIR NAMES ON ALL HANDOUTS PROVIDED.

# GRADE 4 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: A CALL TO ACTION

## RUBRIC

Because this unit includes challenging texts (which require some texts to be shared or read aloud) and videos, a second rubric for speaking and listening has been included.

## WRITING TO CALL OTHERS TO ACTION: TO TEST OR NOT TO TEST Rubric for Argumentative Writing on a Social Issue

| Area | Level 4 | Level 3 | Level 2 | Level 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Introduce a topic and opinion** | The topic and opinion is clear. | The topic and opinion is clear. | The topic and opinion are somewhat unclear. | The topic is completely unclear OR unrelated to social issues OR there is no opinion stated. |
| **Reasons** | You identified three or more reasons for your opinion. | You identified at least two reasons for your opinion. | You identified only one reason, or one of your reasons doesn't support your opinion. | You didn't identify any reasons for your opinion, OR your reasons are unclear OR do not support your opinion OR do not make sense. |
| **Elaboration** | You elaborated by giving many text-based facts and/or details for each of your reasons. | You elaborated by giving at least one text-based fact and/or detail for each of your reasons. | You attempted to elaborate by fact and details for your reasons, but most are not text-based. | You didn't include details to support your reasons, OR these details are confusing OR do not support your reasons OR are not text-based. |
| **Conclusions** | Your writing has a conclusion that connects back to the topic and opinion and has a thoughtful message. | Your writing has a conclusion that connects back to the topic and opinion. | Your writing has a conclusion that somewhat connects back to the topic and opinion. | Your conclusion does not connect back to the topic or opinion OR it is confusing. |
| **Linking works and phrases** | You used at more than three linking words and/or phrases to connect ideas (i.e., *for instance*, *in order to*, *in addition*). | You used at least three linking words and/or phrases to connect ideas (i.e., *for instance*, *in order to*, *in addition*). | You used at least two linking words and/or phrases to connect ideas (i.e., *for instance*, *in order to*, *in addition*). | You used only one or no linking words and/or phrases to connect ideas (i.e., *for instance*, *in order to*, *in addition*). |
| **Organization** | You provided an organized structure in which all ideas are grouped to support your purpose (i.e., paragraphs, sections, letter format). | You provided an organized structure in which most ideas are grouped to support your purpose (i.e., paragraphs, sections, letter format). | You attempted to provide an organized structure, but only some ideas are grouped to support your purpose (i.e., paragraphs, sections, letter format). | Your writing is unorganized and not grouped to support your purpose (i.e., paragraphs, sections, letter format). |
| **Language** | All of your writing is readable because you checked for spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. | Most of your writing is readable because you checked for spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. | Some of your writing is somewhat confusing because you didn't completely check for spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. | The writing is unreadable or confusing because you did not check for spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. |
| **Vocabulary** | You chose many content-specific words and phrases to convey ideas precisely and effectively. | You chose some content-specific words and phrases to convey ideas precisely. | You chose few content-specific words and phrases to convey ideas precisely. | Your writing doesn't demonstrate use of content-specific words and phrases to convey ideas precisely. |
| **Audience** | Your writing maintains an attention to your intended task, purpose, and audience. | Your writing mostly maintains an attention to your intended task, purpose, and audience. | Your writing somewhat maintains an attention to your intended task, purpose, and audience. | Your writing doesn't maintain an attention to your intended task, purpose, and audience. |

# GRADE 4 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: A CALL TO ACTION

## ANNOTATED STUDENT WORK

This section contains annotated student work at a range of score points and suggested next steps for students. The student work shows examples of student understandings and misunderstandings of the task.

**Student A – Score Point 3**

[redacted]
Bronx, NY
May 24, 2012

Dear Chancellor Walcott,

If we don't have standardized testing it will ruin our quality of life.

I am writing today to tell you that we should have standardized testing. Standardized testing is very important to American education. It can lead children to success!

One reason why that is, is because viedo #1 says that test are a fair way to measure student progress. For example, if the state is not measuring student progress, how are they going to know if students are ready for the next grade? How are teachers going to know what to teach?

Another reason why we should have standardized testing is that children go to school to get their education, and get ready for the test. The article "Is the use of standardized testing improving education in America?" says, school-aged children parents believe that state test are improving American education. They know that their children are doing good in school.

The last reason why we should have standardized testing is that, standardized testing helps you go to the next grade. From the article "The Pressure to Perform" the girl in the article said, "While standardized testing is stressful and takes lots of time it can be very beneficial." She meant even though testing is very stressful, it can really help her with her grades. It helps her study more and work hard.

In conclusion, those are all of the reasons why we should have standardized testing. Some of my classmates don't agree with me. The law "No Child Left Behind (NCLB)" agrees with me, so I think you should too.

Sciencerly,

Student A

**Comment [1]:** The initial sentence conveys a precise opinion (L.4.3).

**Comment [2]:** Student clearly lays out his/her position and intentions (W.4.1.a).

**Comment [3]:** Student identifies one of the three reasons required for this writing (W.4.1.b).

**Comment [4]:** This statement is unsubstantiated by the article citation below.

**Comment [5]:** Student identifies the second of the three reasons required for this writing (W.4.1.b).

**Comment [6]:** Student correctly cites Article 1 in this article.

**Comment [7]:** This statement does not support the reason stated above.

**Comment [8]:** Student identifies a total of three reasons to support the argument (W.4.1.b).

**Comment [9]:** Student uses effective transitions phrases that help clarify his/her position (W.4.1.c).

**Comment [10]:** Student refers to a law to support his/her opinion (W.4.1.d).

**Comment [11]:** In the conclusion, the student address the reader, but still maintains appropriate tone (L.4.3).

**Additional Comments:**

- Minimal misspellings were found.
- Grammatical structures were sound.
- Student uses linking phrases to link ideas across the letter (W.4.1).

**Summary:**

- The student's work is organized and follows the format of a letter. It includes three distinct reasons which support the position taken on testing. Each of the reasons is well-elaborated with text-based details. However, not all of the details successfully support the claims. The student successfully infuses both content-specific vocabulary and linking words and phrases to transition between ideas in the writing as well as elaborate on thinking (W.4.4, W.4.1).
- The student engages the reader while maintaining appropriate tone. Although the ending is not as strong as the beginning of this piece, Student E does end the piece with some sense of closure (W.4.1.d).

**Next Steps:**

- Assist the student in evaluating evidence to support a claim. Help them to identify key details in a mentor text tht successfully support a claim and ask them to explain why the evidence is effective. Then have them practice finding and evaluating evidence for their own essay.
- Assist the student in writing conclusions. "Those are all of the reasons why we should have standardize testing" can be phrased in a way that will connect better with the argument (W.4.1.c).
- Support can be provided to assist the student in varying transitional phrases. The student can work on varying the word usage, instead of the simple phrases such as *one reason*, *for example*, *another reason*, *while*, *in conclusion* (W.4.1.d).

**Student B – Score Point 2**

Dear Chancellor Wallcott,

I have a opinion. My opinion is that there should be state testing because testing can help teachers. Testing proves that you know something. Also testing gives parents a good idea of how their childern are doing in class. That why I say that we should have state testing.

Testing can help teachers because the test can give the teachers what to teach the kids and when to teach it. The result is more focused teaching. If the teachers teach about the unit then the students can do the tests and can get the answers correct. Also they can be smart but with out the test they do not know if they are smart.

Testing proves that you know something. For instance, docters, lawyers, business people, air plane pilots, and teachers took the state test. They all took it because they want to prove that they know that. You also have to take the state test then you can be what you want to be.

Testing give parents a good idea of how their childeren are doing in class. Compared to students across the conutry and the city. Testing help the parent because when it comes to the state test you will see if your child is paying attention then that means they are bad and going to fail the test.

That is why I think that we should have state testing cause it is inportant to your life because you will not be all of those things if you fail or if you miss the test. So that is why the test is very very inportant.

The end.

**Comment [12]:** Student has introduced the topic of the letter taking a position on testing which is supported with one reason: "*testing can help teachers*" (W.4.1.a).

**Comment [13]:** Two reasons given to support student opinion (W.4.1.b).

**Comment [14]:** Student gives one of three reasons in support of testing (W.4.1.a).

**Comment [15]:** Student elaborates using information taken from the article "Pros and Cons of Testing". [W.4.1]

**Comment [16]:** This is the student's second of three reasons for testing taken from the article "Is the use of standardized tests improving education in America?" [W.4.1]

**Comment [17]:** This is the third reason the student has given in support of testing.

**Comment [18]:** Student attempts to conclude the letter, but doesn't directly tie the conclusion to the opinions offered (W.4.1.d).

**Additional Comments:**

- The student has organized the writing into focused paragraphs, and has included the salutation "*Dear Chancellor Wallcott.*"The letter is missing a salutation at the end.
- The student uses the phrases *that why, for instance*, and *that is why* to link ideas and thinking.
- The student has miss*pelled several grade-leve*l words: *childern*, *childeren, docters, conutry*, and *inportant*.
- The student has *incorporated some key* vocabu*lary such as state test, unit*, and *focused*.
- Although not directly cited, the student used two articles.

**Summary:**

- Student starts out with an introductory paragraph in which he/she states an opinion backed up by two text-based details. The next three paragraphs feature well-elaborated, text-based examples that support the original opinion stated.
- Student uses some transitional words/phrases to connect the ideas across the writing.
- Student struggles with grade-level spellings of words such as *childeren* and *conutry*. He/she ends the piece weakly with the words *The end*.

**Next Steps**

- Student needs support with citing articles and learning the difference between paraphrasing and direct quotation. The use of graphic organizers to help the student collect key phrases from articles support their claim may help.
- This student needs support with writing conclusions.
- This student could also use support with using resources such as a content-area word wall, dictionaries, and personal spelling lists.
- Support this student in the continued use of transitional words/phrases to link ideas and transition thinking.
- Provide samples of letters for the student to learn letter format and style.

**Student C – Score Point 1**

Dear Mr. chancellor wallcott

My opinion is their shoudn't be testing kids feel stress out. Kids might not Know some questions. kids can get nervous. For example: tests can place a lot of stress on students. In addition tests can be very long to take and Kids can get tired. White standardized testing is stressful and takes lots of time, it can also be very beneficial.

If Kids stop doing tests. Kids will have more energy. They will save energy. That why at the end they could finish 3 or 4 tests. Then they only get 2 or 3 questions wrong.

**Comment [19]:** Student addresses the prompt by stating his/her opinion (W.4.1.a).

**Comment [20]:** Student elaborates his/her previous comment (W.4.1.a).

**Comment [21]:** Though not directly stated, this support seems to be taken from the "Pros and Cons of Testing". [W.4.1]

**Comment [22]:** Student seems to be referencing the same article. There is no elaboration given for this statement. [W.4.1]

**Comment [23]:** Student concludes the letter with this paragraph. It is not clear how the initial statement of this paragraph receives support from the statements that follow (W.4.1.d).

**Additional Comments:**

- The student uses some transitional words to connect ideas and thoughts: *That why at the end, White* (while)*, Then, For example.*
- Student addresses the Chancellor twice, *Dear Mr. chancellor wallcott.*
- Student uses three content-specific words*: beneficial, energy, stress.*
- The letter has two paragraphs: one introduc*tory and one to close.*
- *W*ith the exception of *shoudn't,* grade-level words are spelled correctly, as well as some of the more challenging content vocabulary (*beneficial)*.

**Summary:**

- Student C has an introductory paragraph and a closing paragraph (W4.1).
- While not directly stated, there is some reference to one of the articles used in this task ("Pros and Cons of Testing").
- There is limited elaboration in the first paragraph, and the second paragraph contains only unsupported statements made by the student.
- In addition, Student C still struggles with language conventions such as punctuation. This creates sentence fragments which affect readability.
- Student has attempted to use content-specific vocabulary (*beneficial*) and spells most grade-level words correctly (L.4.3).

**Next Steps:**

- Assist this student to collect evidence from multiple sources and to organize evidence to support opinion statements.
- Provide support for using effective punctuation while writing (L.4.2). Some instruction around the parts of a sentence and how punctuation helps to delineate the beginning and end of a particular thought or statement may help.

# GRADE 4 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: A CALL TO ACTION

## INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

The instructional supports on the following pages include a unit outline with formative assessments and suggested learning activities. Teachers may use this unit outline as it is described, integrate parts of it into a currently existing curriculum unit, or use it as a model or checklist for a currently existing unit on a different topic.

# Unit Outline

## Grade 4 Literacy in English Language Arts: Writing to Call Others to Action

**UNIT TOPIC AND LENGTH:**

The opinion writing unit for fourth grade, "Writing to Call Others to Action," endeavors to teach students that they have power through their writing. Students develop an opinion based on a topic and write from this perspective. Students learn the importance of considering their task, purpose, and audience. Students demonstrate through an awareness of why they are writing their pieces and they effectively target the intended audience.

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS ASSESSED:**

W.4.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
c. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., *for instance*, *in order to*, *in addition*).
d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

W.4.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

L.4.3. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely.
b. Choose punctuation for effect.
c. Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English (e.g., presenting ideas) and situations where informal discourse is appropriate (e.g., small-group discussion).

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:**

W.4.5. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language Standards 1–3, up to and including Grade 4).

RI.4.1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

SL.4.2. Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

SL.4.3. Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

| BIG IDEAS/ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS: | ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: |
| --- | --- |
| ➢ Writers are more credible when they | ➢ How can I write an effective opinion that |

| | |
|---|---|
| support their writing with specific reasons and facts from credible sources.<br>➢ Writers need to consider and tailor their writing to an audience.<br>➢ Writers need to have a purpose for their writing. | will call others to action on important social issues?<br><br>➢ What social issues are important to me? How can I gather evidence through reading to help communicate my message to others? |
| **CONTENT:**<br>➢ Arguments for and against standardized testing<br>➢ Writing as political<br>➢ Transitional phrases<br>➢ Concept of call to action<br>➢ The writing process of drafting, revising, and editing<br>➢ Digital tools to create and share a finished writing product<br>➢ How to appropriately address a letter | **SKILLS:**<br>➢ Forming and presenting opinions<br>➢ Supporting opinions with reasons<br>➢ Supporting reasons with facts and details<br>➢ Using informal/formal language relative to audience in order to create credibility<br>➢ Taking and organizing notes |
| **VOCABULARY/KEY TERMS:**<br>argument, social issues, credible, reference resources, sources, consider, leader, relevant, irrelevant, accuracy, "call to action", convince and support, social excerpt, search engine, bookmarking, bias | |
| **ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE AND ACTIVITIES:**<br><br>**INITIAL ASSESSMENT: SHOULD CELL PHONES BE ALLOWED IN SCHOOL?**<br><br>Students will view and discuss videos and read a short article. Students will then develop and write an opinion piece in the form of a letter. The target audience for this letter will be the Education Chancellor. The final task rubric can be used to assess and plan for instruction. This task will serve as a baseline. | |
| **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT**<br><br>**SUGGESTIONS:**<br><br>➢ Building in quick writes based on guiding questions for each article can provide valuable guidance for instructional adjustments.<br>➢ Midway through the unit (third or fourth week), consider asking students to write a few paragraphs, taking a stand on an issue of interest to them and supporting that stand with one or two reasons. | |

### FINAL PERFORMANCE TASK: TO TEST OR NOT TO TEST

This task requires the students to analyze texts viewed and read (independently or together), and develop and write an opinion piece for or against standardized testing. The students will then compose and publish a letter describing their stand on the testing debate and send their letter to the Schools Chancellor of the City of New York. The task may take between 4–5 days to complete (this includes the time for reading, viewing the videos, discussing, planning, and writing the letter).

### LEARNING PLAN AND ACTIVITIES:

The following teaching points are organized under the three guiding questions and are followed by the corresponding standards. They are the basis for the mini-lessons to be taught during the reading and writing workshops. The order and length of these lessons may be adjusted dependent on teacher discretion.

**Guiding Question 1: What social issues are important to me, and how do I begin organizing myself to write an argumentative letter?**

- Review fact and opinion
- Reviewing your informational pieces to review facts and form opinions/points of view about the information you learned
- Deciding on an argument upon which to build your letter
- Identifying reasons for an opinion
- Supporting each reason with facts and details from resources
- Finding gaps in facts and details to support your reasons and planning for further development when needed
- Taking notes on important information

**Guiding Question 2: What goes into a successful argumentative writing piece? How do I plan for getting this message across to others?**

- Reviewing the purpose of writing argumentative letters and discussing different examples of argumentative writing: Where do we see this type of writing?
- Introducing your opinion statement and supporting-reasons paragraph
- Writing a clear and concise topic that states an opinion and reasons
- Writing an introductory statement that eases into your argument (i.e., first you give a compliment or lay out a situation, then you make your argument)
- Organizing information by paragraphs, using each of your reasons as the main idea for each paragraph (graphic organizers for the beginning)
- Reviewing how to write a paragraph with supporting facts and details that support your reasons
- Using transitional words (in addition to previous lessons and categorized)
    - **Chronological** (words about the order of things): *first*, *second*, *third*, *next*, *then*, *after*, *following*
    - **Cause-Effect** (words about things which make other things happen): *so*, *thus*, *therefore*, *hence*, *consequently*, *due to*
    - **Example** (words to show what a thing is): *one such*, *another*, *for instance*, *for example*
    - **Addition** (words that add more information): *similarly*, *additionally*, *another*, *also*, *moreover*

- **Opposition** (words that signal a conflict or problem): *but*, *though*, *however*, *on the other hand*, *conversely*, *yet*, *nonetheless*, *nevertheless*

- Comparing/contrasting linking words/phrases (*if we don't…then…*; *on the other hand*; *if we wait to take action…then*)
- Producing a strong conclusion paragraph using and rephrasing the opinion and the action and result expected
- Writing a closing statement that wraps up your argument

For those students who need additional support with introductory and/or concluding remarks, a class set of sentence starters may be charted for reference.

**Guiding Question 3: How do I prepare to publish my work to call others to action?**

- Following proper letter format to compose your letter
- Editing your writing for proper punctuation, spelling, and grammar
- Revising your writing to ensure that you maintain a formal tone (i.e., no insulting language such as *dumb* or *stupid*; no accusatory tones such as, "You never did anything to help the situation!")
- Formatting your text to get message across clearly
- Knowing how to email or snail mail a letter
- Publishing your letter as a blog post, PowerPoint, or audio recording (extension for those who complete assignment and who would like to learn another format during technology class)

**Additional Support Strategies:**

Providing daily instruction in domain specific vocabulary will provide support for many students, but for ELL students specifically. In addition, keeping a running tab of content vocabulary and definitions throughout the unit will provide a helpful resource for your students.

**RESOURCES:**


Appleberry, Christina. "Testing and other measures of life /PRO: Standardized exams show what you've learned," *SFGate*, May 1, 2001, accessed March 11, 2013, http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/openforum/article/Testing-and-other-measures-of-life-PRO-2925789.php.

Chavous, Kevin P. "The Pressure to Perform," *The Huffington Post*, April 25, 2012, accessed March 11, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-p-chavous/the-pressure-to-perform_b_1450954.html.

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"Is the use of standardized tests improving education in America?," http://standardizedtests.procon.org/.

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# GRADE 4

# WRITING TO CALL OTHERS TO ACTION

## Pre-Performance Task: Should Cell Phones Be Allowed in Schools?

## Teacher Directions:

Inform students that they will be starting a unit on writing argumentative letters. This unit will help them learn about the power they have as writers to persuade others to take action on an important social issue.

Tell them that you want to know what they know about argumentative writing—writing that includes their opinion—and using facts from texts and videos. Tell them that this performance task will help you to determine what to focus on to help them become better writers of argumentative letters and essays.
They will spend two days on the task. On the first day, they will watch two videos and read one article on the use of cell phones in schools. Inform them that some people believe that cell phones should be allowed in schools and others feel that they should not be allowed in schools. They will take notes using these resources.

Afterwards, they will use their notes to help them form an opinion about whether they believe that cell phones should be used in school or if they should be banned from schools. They will use their notes and resources to help them write an argumentative letter that includes their opinion and the reasons for their opinion, supported by the facts and details they have collected.

TELL STUDENTS TO WRITE THEIR NAMES ON ALL HANDOUTS PROVIDED.

**Day 1**
***Task 1***

On the first day, they will watch two videos:

**Video 1:**
"Banning Cell Phones from Class Helps Students Focus"
by Chris Morrison
December 10, 2012
NBC Action News
Kansas City, Missouri
Summary: Cell phones are an essential (necessary) part of modern life. But sometimes they can be a distraction, especially for students. This video presents a college professor who believes cell phones are a distraction.
Link: http://www.kshb.com/dpp/news/education/banning-cell-phones-from-class-helps-students-focus

**Video 2:**
"Plymouth-Canton High Schools Lifting Total Cell Phone Ban"
by Alexis Wiley
December 21, 2011
WJBK/MyFoxDetroit.com
Summary: A high school in Michigan decides to change the policies/rules they have banning cell phones in schools. Watch this video to see and hear about what people think about changing the rules about cell phones.
Link: http://www.myfoxdetroit.com/dpp/news/local/plymouth-canton-high-schools-lifting-total-cell-phone-ban-20111221-ms

- Before watching the videos, tell students to take careful notes on the graphic organizer provided. Go over the graphic organizer to ensure they understand how to use it.
- Read the summary of each video to the students.
- Play the first video one time without taking notes.
- Play the video a second time and tell students they will take notes as they watch the video. Pause midway to give students a chance jot down notes.

***Task 2***

Tell students that they will read an article on the pros and cons of cell phones in the classroom (discuss the meaning of *pros and cons*). Tell them that they will read the article on their own and that they may write or mark up their copy to highlight important parts.

***Task 3***
After collecting their notes, provide students with the graphic organizer "Putting Your Notes Together". Tell them to begin organizing their opinion about the use of cell phones in schools. They should write that in the first box at the top of the table. Next, they will have to start thinking of reasons for their opinion. They must have at least two reasons. There is an extra box if they have an additional reason. After, they will find the notes that best support their reasons and write them in the box next to their reasons. When they are done organizing their notes for the videos and the text, collect the work so the students may use this the next day. Tell the students that they will use these notes tomorrow to write their argumentative letters.

**Day 2**
***Task 4***

- Distribute the notes taken on the previous day back to the students.
- Read the student guidelines.
- Tell them that they will work independently for approximately one hour to draft a letter to Ms. Bailey regarding cell phone use at P.S. 9.
- Tell them to be attentive to the guidelines provided on their student copy and that their work will be scored with these guidelines in mind. Tell them to try their best even if they're not certain about how to write an argumentative task. The goal of this task is to find out what they already know and what the class needs to focus on to become better argumentative writers.
- After an hour, collect the notes and letter and clip them together for review with the use of a rubric that will be provided to you.

# GRADE 4

# WRITING TO CALL OTHERS TO ACTION

## Pre-Performance Task: Should Cell Phones Be Allowed in Schools?

## Guidelines for Students:

The use of cell phones in schools has become an important social issues topic in our lives. Some people are against cell phones in the classroom. Some people argue that cell phones should be used in the classroom. There are many reasons for their opinions.

After watching two videos about cell phones in schools and reading the text "Cell Phones at School: Should They Be Allowed?" by Maya Cohen, write an argumentative letter to the principal, Ms./Mr. _____, stating your opinion on this important social issues topic. You will use the notes you collected and organized to help you write your letter.

Your letter should include the following:

- A salutation (i.e., Dear Ms./Mr. _____)
- An opinion about whether cell phones should be allowed in schools or if they should not
- At least two reasons for your opinion
- Each reason should be supported by facts and details from the notes you collected about what you saw in the videos and what you read
- Linking words (i.e., *for example*, *for instance*, *in addition*, *although*, *since*)
- A conclusion
- An appropriate closing (i.e., *Sincerely*, *Cordially*, *Respectfully*)

Your principal can't wait to hear your opinion about this very important topic!

# Video Viewing Sheet

**Directions: Watch the video one time WITHOUT TAKING NOTES. You will watch the video a second time. During this time, you will take notes while you watch the video.**

**Video 1**

**Television News Report**

Summary: Cell phones are an essential (necessary) part of modern life. But sometimes they can be a distraction, especially for students. This video presents a college professor who believes cell phones are a distraction.

| Reasons Some People Are AGAINST Cell Phones in Schools | Reasons Some People Think We SHOULD HAVE Cell Phones in Schools |
|---|---|
| | |

# Video Viewing Sheet

**Directions: Watch the video one time WITHOUT TAKING NOTES. You will watch the video a second time. During this time, you will take notes while you watch the video.**

**Video 2**

- **Television News Report**

  Summary: A high school in Michigan decides to change the policies/rules they have banning cell phones in schools. Watch this video to see and hear about what people think about changing the rules about cell phones.

| Reasons Some People Are AGAINST Cell Phones in Schools | Reasons Some People Think We SHOULD HAVE Cell Phones in Schools |
|---|---|
| | |

# 4TH GRADE
# WRITING TO CALL OTHERS TO ACTION
## Instructional Supports for Culminating Performance Task

**Day 1**
***Task 1***

***Introduce the task. Tell students that the final task will require them to write a letter to the NYC Chancellor. The students will consider the question of whether they are in support of standardized testing or against standardized testing. They will write a letter to the Chancellor, arguing their perspective using reasons they have collected through reading the text that supports their position. To prepare for writing the letter, they will watch two videos and read together four texts on the topic. They will take notes. Afterwards, they will select one video and at least two articles that support their argument. They will include information from the video and articles as support for their position.***

On the first day, they will watch one video and two articles will be read aloud. Students will take notes.

**Video 1:** "Testing: No Child Left Behind." *Where We Stand: America's Schools in the 21st Century*. Writ. Rebecca Haggerty and Molly Knight Raskin. Dir. Rebecca Haggerty. PBS, 2008. Television. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wherewestand/reports/testing-no-child-left-behind/segment-four-from-full-episode/27/.

- Preview key vocabulary and challenging concepts.
- Before watching the video, tell students to take careful notes on the graphic organizer provided (Video Viewing Sheet 1). Go over the graphic organizer to ensure they understand how to use it.
- Read the summary of the video to the students.
- Play the first video one time without taking notes.
- Provide an opportunity for students to discuss and pose questions about the video.
- Play the video a second time and tell students they will take notes as they watch the video. Pause midway to give students a chance jot down notes.

Tell students that they will listen to (and read along with you) two articles listed below, and that they will be required to take notes on the texts they listen to.

- "Is the use of standardized tests improving education in America?" (Article 1)
- Provide an opportunity for students to discuss and pose questions about the article. (During the discussion, encourage students to talk about and record their understandings and questions, which might be addressed through repeated readings of the text.)
- Reread the article.
- "Pros and Cons of Testing" (Article 2)
- Provide an opportunity for students to discuss and pose questions about the article. (During the discussion, encourage students to talk about and record their understandings and questions, which might be addressed through repeated readings of the text.)

- Reread the article.

The articles discuss the pros and cons of standardized testing in elementary schools (review the meaning of *pros and cons*). Tell students that they may reread the articles on their own and that they may write or mark up their copy to highlight important parts. Collect the notes at the close of the session to be returned to students on Day 2.

**Day 2**
***Task 2***

Students will watch the second video.

**Video 2:** Couric, Katie. "Notebook: Standardized Tests." CBS Evening News, October 4, 2007, accessed March 11, 2013, http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=2471025n.
*This video briefly describes some of the negative effects that have occurred as a result of standardized testing (transcript included)*.

- Preview key vocabulary and challenging concepts.
- Before watching the video, tell students to take careful notes on the graphic organizer provided (Video Viewing Sheet 2). Go over the graphic organizer to ensure they understand how to use it.
- Read the summary of the video to the students.
- Play the first video one time without taking notes.
- Provide an opportunity for students to discuss and pose questions about the video.
- Play the video a second time and tell students they will take notes as they watch the video. Pause midway to give students a chance jot down notes.

Tell students that they will listen to (and read along with you) two articles listed below, and that they will be required to take notes on the texts they listen to.

- "The Pressure to Perform" by Kevin P. Chavous
- Provide an opportunity for students to discuss and pose questions about the article. (During the discussion, encourage students to talk about and record their understandings and questions, which might be addressed through repeated readings of the text.)
- Reread the article.
- "Testing and Other Measures of Life" by Christina Appleberry
- Provide an opportunity for students to discuss and pose questions about the article. (During the discussion, encourage students to talk about and record their understandings and questions, which might be addressed through repeated readings of the text.)
- Reread the article.

The above two articles offer two perspectives on about standardized testing in elementary schools (review the meaning of *pros and cons*). Tell students that they may reread their copies of the articles on their own and that they may write or mark up their copy to highlight important parts.

**Day 3**
***Task 3***

After collecting their notes, provide students with the graphic organizer "Putting Your Notes Together". Tell them to begin organizing their opinion about whether students should be expected to take state (standardized) tests or not. They should write their opinion in the first box at the top of the table. Next, they will have to start thinking of reasons for their opinion. They must have at least two reasons. There is an extra box if they have an additional reason. Afterward, they will find the notes that best support their reasons and write them in the box next to their reasons.

After the students have formed their opinion and supported their opinion with reasons, they should use the "List of Resources" sheet provided to cite the resources they referenced in the "Putting Your Notes Together" sheet.

When they are done organizing their notes for the videos and the text, collect the work so the students may use it the next day. Tell the students that they will use these notes tomorrow to draft and write their argumentative letters.

**Day 4**
***Task 4***

- Distribute the notes taken on the previous day back to the students.
- Read the "Student Guidelines".
- Tell students that they will work independently for approximately one hour to draft a letter to Chancellor of NYC schools regarding standardized testing in New York City elementary schools.
- Tell them to be attentive to the guidelines provided and that their work will be scored with these guidelines in mind. Tell them to try their best. The goal of this task is to find out what they have learned about argumentative writing. In addition, they will be assessed on how they apply those skills and knowledge towards an authentic and current topic that affects them today.
- A content-specific vocabulary sheet will be provided to each student (or content-specific word wall with definitions).
- After an hour, collect the notes and draft of the letter and clip them together to begin reviewing with the use of the provided rubric.

**Day 5**
***Revising and Editing***

- Distribute the notes taken on the previous day along with the drafted letters the students started on the previous day.
- Tell the students that they will spend today completing and publishing their letter.

# Video Viewing Sheet

**Directions:** Watch the video one time WITHOUT TAKING NOTES. You will watch the video a second time. During this time, you will take notes while you watch the video.

**Video 1**

- **Television News Report**

  Summary: This segment of a video asks the question: Is all of this testing doing any good? The video reviews how American students are among the most tested in the world, and how state spending on creating standardized tests has almost tripled to over a billion dollars. We also learn how China, Singapore, and Finland and most European countries have national standards. The US does not.

| Reasons Some People Are AGAINST State Testing | Reasons Some People Think We SHOULD HAVE State Testing |
|---|---|
| | |

# Video Viewing Sheet

**Directions:** Watch the video one time WITHOUT TAKING NOTES. You will watch the video a second time. During this time, you will take notes while you watch the video.

**Video 2**

**Television News Report**

Summary: This news video describes some of the negative effects that have occurred as a result of state (standardized) testing.

| Reasons Some People are AGAINST State Testing | Reasons Some People Think We SHOULD HAVE State Testing |
|---|---|
| | |

# PUTTING YOUR NOTES TOGETHER

**Directions:** Use your notes from the videos and the text you marked with your notes to help you organize your argumentative letter. Write your opinion at the top of the table. Write down at least two reasons for your opinion and support it with the facts and details from the videos and the text you read.

| **My Opinion:** | |
|---|---|
| **Reasons** | **Facts or Details From the Resources Used** |
| Reason #1: | |
| Reason #2: | |
| Reason #3: | |

# List of Resources

**Directions**:

1. You must choose AT LEAST one video **and** two articles that will help you write your argumentative letter.
2. Choose the resources that will best help you make your argument.
3. List the resources you will use to write your argumentative letter in the table below.

| Type of Resource | Title | Author or Source (i.e., web address) |
|---|---|---|
| ○ Video<br>○ Article | | |
| ○ Video<br>○ Article | | |
| ○ Video<br>○ Article | | |
| ○ Video<br>○ Article | | |