



Technical Report

Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA)

Spring 2015 Writing Test

Grades 4, 8, and 11

October 2015





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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 HISTORY

In January 2009, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) contracted with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) to provide and operate a computerized information system to support the administration, record keeping, and reporting for statewide student assessment (NeSA-Reading, NeSA-Mathematics, and NeSA-Science) under the direction of the Department of Education. Legislative Bill (LB) 1157 passed by the 2008 Nebraska Legislature (<http://www.legislature.ne.gov/FloorDocs/100/PDF/Final/LB1157.pdf>) requires a single statewide assessment of writing, reading, mathematics, and science in Nebraska's K-12 public schools against the Nebraska academic content standards.

The legislation requires that:

- The assessments will be used for accountability purposes.
- The assessments will be criterion-referenced.

The NDE prescribed such assessments starting in the 2009-2010 school year and phased in as described in Table 1.1.1. The state uses the expertise and experience of the educators in the state to participate to the maximum extent possible, in the design and development of the statewide assessment system.

Table 1.1.1 NeSA Administration Schedule

Subject	Administration Year		Grades
	Field Test	Operational	
Reading	2009	2010	3 through 8 plus 1 high school
Mathematics	2010	2011	3 through 8 plus 1 high school
Science	2011	2012	At least 1 grade in elementary, middle/junior high, and high school

In October 2010, the NDE contracted with DRC to provide and operate a computerized information system to support the administration, record keeping, and reporting for the statewide student NeSA-Writing (NeSA-W) assessment under the direction of the Department of Education.

NeSA-W has been phased in as described in Table 1.1.2.

Table 1.1.2 NeSA-W Administration Schedule

Year	Paper/Pencil Mode	Online Mode
2011	Grades 4 and 8	Grade 11, Pilot Year
2012	Grade 4	Grades 8 and 11
2013	Grade 4	Grades 8 and 11

A governor-appointed Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of three nationally recognized experts in assessment and measurements, one local administrator, and one teacher from Nebraska provides technical advice, guidance, and research to help NDE make informed decisions regarding standards, assessment, and accountability.

1.2 OVERVIEW

The NeSA tests are developed specifically for Nebraska. Since 2002, the Nebraska statewide writing assessment has been annually administered in grades 4, 8, and 11 for the purpose of providing school districts with instructional information and to include writing results from grades 4 and 8 as the “other academic indicator” in the federal accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The Nebraska statewide writing assessment is intended to:

1. Gather information to assist teachers in determining the progress of students in meeting state or local standards for writing;
2. Provide each local school district with a report of student progress in meeting state or local standards for writing; and
3. Lead to improved writing by Nebraska students.

DRC was the provider of the printed and online versions of the 2015 NeSA-W Tests.

Paper/Pencil and Online Testing Window: January 19 – February 6, 2015

Number of Potential Testing Sites

249 districts

912 schools

2. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WRITING ASSESSMENT

2.1 WRITING TOPICS

At each grade level, students responded to a writing topic developed by NDE to measure composition of writing as specified in the writing content standards. Each student responded to one writing topic in a specific mode. The types of the writing topics for each grade were as follows:

- Grade 4 – Narrative
- Grade 8 – Descriptive
- Grade 11 – Persuasive

2.2 TEST SESSIONS, TIMING, AND FORMAT

The test window for the grade 4 paper/pencil tests, including make-up tests, was January 19 – February 6, 2015. The grade 4 tests were administered in two independent sessions on two consecutive days. Each session was 40 minutes, unless a student's IEP or 504 Plan called for additional time. Spanish versions of these tests were developed and made available by DRC for any district that requested them. All student responses were returned to DRC using standard writing booklets for processing and scoring.

The test window for the grades 8 and 11 tests, including make-up tests, was January 19 – February 6, 2015. The majority of students were administered the test online in one session. Students were allowed to use paper to pre-write and continued their work online by drafting and finalizing their response. It was recommended by NDE that districts schedule 90 minutes for students to complete the assessment; however, the test was not timed, and students were allowed as much time as necessary to complete and submit their final essays. Students with an IEP or 504 Plan were allowed to use a paper/pencil test as an accommodation.

The required grade 4 NeSA-W paper/pencil test as well as the grades 8 and 11 NeSA-W online tests were available to all schools. Spanish versions of the tests were made available to all districts. Table 2.2.1 shows the number of student who took each exam by mode of administration.

Table 2.2.1 2015 NeSA-W Test Participation

Grade	Number of Students Tested Paper/Pencil	Number of Students Tested Online
4	22618	N/A
8	453	21433
11	414	20761

Tables 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 depict the N count as well as the percentage of students that completed their online test in each time span. Student time span is based on the student's initial login and final log out. Students' tests may be unlocked to allow testing across longer periods of time, even multiple days. Thus, in some cases, the elapsed time may not reflect the actual amount of time a student spent completing the test.

Table 2.2.2 2015 NeSA-W Grade 8 Online Test Times

Time Span in Minutes	Student Count	% in Each Time Span
0-10	86	0.40
10-20	146	0.68
20-30	360	1.68
30-40	803	3.75
40-50	1573	7.34
50-60	2314	10.80
60-70	2749	12.83
70-80	2840	13.25
80-90	2342	10.93
90+	8220	38.35
Total	21433	100.00

Table 2.2.3 2015 NeSA-W Grade 11 Online Test Times

Time Span in Minutes	Student Count	% in Each Time Span
0-10	34	0.16
10-20	226	1.09
20-30	806	3.88
30-40	1913	9.21
40-50	2989	14.40
50-60	3225	15.53
60-70	3085	14.86
70-80	2633	12.68
80-90	1796	8.65
90+	4054	19.53
Total	20761	100.00

2.3 SHIPPING, PACKAGING, AND DELIVERY OF MATERIALS

A single shipment was sent out by DRC to each district. The shipment was delivered by January 5, 2015. The shipment contained all necessary materials to complete the NeSA-W test administration.

- *Writing Manual for Test Coordinators and Administrators*
- Secure Materials: Standard Writing Booklets and Spanish Translation Booklets (Grades 4, 8, and 11)

- Administrative Materials: Student PreID Labels, District/School Labels, Do Not Score Labels, Return Shipping Labels, etc.

DRC ensured that all assessment materials were assembled correctly prior to shipping. DRC Operations staff used the automated Operations Materials Management System (OpsMMS) to assign secure materials to a district at the time of ship out. This system used barcode technology to provide an automated quality check between items requested for and items shipped to each site. A shipment box manifest was produced and placed in each box shipped. DRC Operations staff double-checked all box contents against the manifest prior to the box being sealed for shipment to ensure accurate delivery of materials. Districts and schools were selected at random and examined for correct and complete packaging and labeling.

OpsMMS, along with the UPS tracking system, allowed DRC to track the items from the point of shipment from DRC's warehouse facility to receipt at the district. All DRC shipping facilities, materials processing facilities, and storage facilities are secure. Access is restricted by security code. Only DRC inventory control personnel have access to stored secure materials. DRC employees are trained in and made aware of the high level of security that is required.

The paper/pencil assessments for grades 4, 8, and 11 were packaged by school, and shipped to districts to the attention of the District Assessment Contacts. DRC packed 32,965 standard writing booklets, 463 Spanish translation booklets, 3,027 manuals, and approximately 4,800 non-secure materials for testing sites. DRC used UPS to deliver materials to the testing sites.

2.4 MATERIALS RETURN

The materials return window was February 11-12, 2015. DRC used UPS for all return shipments.

2.5 TEST SECURITY MEASURES

Test security is essential to obtaining reliable and valid scores for accountability purposes. The 2014 NeSA-Writing included a Test Security Agreement that was provided to all districts by NDE in Nebraska's *Standards, Assessment, and Accountability Updates*. The agreement was to be signed by every school principal and District Assessment Contact and faxed to NDE by October 31, 2014. The purpose of the agreement was to serve as a tool to document that the individuals responsible for administering the assessments both understood and acknowledged the importance of test security. The Test Security Agreement attested that all security measures were followed concerning the handling of secure materials.

2.6 SAMPLE MANUALS

Copies of the *Writing Manual for Test Coordinators and Administrators* and the *Online Test Administration Manual* can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education website at www.education.ne.gov/assessment.

3. PROCESSING AND SCORING THE NeSA-WRITING

3.1 RECEIPT OF MATERIALS

Receipt of NeSA-Writing materials began on February 11, 2015, and concluded on February 23, 2015. Any materials received after February 23, 2015, were considered late and were checked-in, scanned, and processed during the late window of February 25, 2015 through March 27, 2015. OpsMMS was utilized to receive materials securely, accurately, and efficiently. This system features advanced automation and cutting-edge barcode scanners. Captured data were organized into reports, which provided timely information with respect to suspected missing materials.

The check-in process occurred immediately upon receipt of materials; therefore, DRC provided immediate feedback to districts regarding any missing materials based on actual receipts versus expected receipts. DRC produced and submitted to NDE a Missing Materials Report that listed all standard and Spanish translation writing booklets by district, school, and grade that were not returned to DRC.

3.2 SCANNING OF MATERIALS

DRC used its image scanning system to capture student essays. The images were then loaded into the image scoring system for both the hand scoring of student responses, and for the capture of demographic data.

Customized scanning programs for all scannable documents were prepared to read the writing documents and to electronically format the scanned information. Before materials arrived, all image scanning programs went through a quality review process that included scanning of mock data from production booklets to ensure proper data collection.

After each batch of writing booklets was scanned, writing documents were processed through a computer-based edit program to detect potential errors as a result of smudges, multiple marks, and omits in predetermined fields. Marks that did not meet the pre-defined editing standards were routed to human editors for resolution.

Before batches of writing responses were extracted for scoring, a final edit was performed to ensure that all requirements for final processing were met. If a batch contained errors, it was flagged for further review before being extracted for scoring and reporting.

3.3 MATERIALS STORAGE

Upon completion of processing, student writing booklets were boxed for security purposes and final storage.

- Project-specific box labels were created containing unique customer and project information, material type, batch number, pallet/box number, and the number of boxes for a given batch.
- Boxes were stacked on project-specific pallets that were labeled with a list of its contents and delivered to the Materials Distribution Center for final secure storage.
- All paper/pencil writing booklets will be securely stored for one year until DRC receives written authorization from NDE requesting that they be permanently destroyed.
- All electronic student response images will be securely stored until DRC receives written authorization from NDE requesting that they be permanently deleted.

4. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SERVICES

In 2015, NDE continued the use of analytic scoring rubrics for all grades. These rubrics use a 1-4 scale across four domains to define narrative, descriptive, and persuasive writing performance analytically. The rubrics define qualities of each score point for each of the four domains; Ideas/Content, Organization, Voice/Word Choice, and Sentence Fluency/Conventions.

4.1 RANGEFINDING

After receiving student responses from the 2014 NeSA-W Field Test, DRC's Performance Assessment Services (PAS) staff reviewed all of the responses and assembled them into sets that exemplified the range of different score points, for each of the four domains, for each of the three prompts. Copies of these sets were made for each member of the rangefinding committees. DRC's PAS staff then travelled to Lincoln, Nebraska (June 25 and 26, 2014) and facilitated the rangefinding sessions. The rangefinding committees consisted of Nebraska educators, NDE staff members and DRC Performance Assessment Staff.

The rangefinding meeting began in a joint session with a review of the history of the assessment and a discussion of the rangefinding process, along with guidelines for the consensus scoring of the assembled responses. The group then broke into three grade specific committees consisting of ten or twelve NE educators, an NDE representative and two DRC facilitators on each committee. Each committee reviewed the current prompt, scoring rubric, and the Scoring Guide anchor papers from the spring 2014 NeSA-W Operational Test. Following this review and discussion, each committee then began to consensus score 120 responses selected by PAS from the 2014 NeSA-W Field Test.

Initially, each student response was read aloud and then discussed by all members of the group equally, to ensure that everyone was interpreting the analytic rubric consistently and uniformly. Each of the four domain scores were addressed independently and following the discussions, scores were agreed upon in each domain. The first set of 20 responses was discussed at length and then consensus scored using this method. Committee members then went on to score additional responses independently. For each student response, committee members' scores were recorded and, if needed, were discussed until a consensus was reached. Responses for which there was a strong agreement among committee members were identified as potential anchor papers to be used in the Scoring Guides for training DRC readers. Each committee consensus scored over 100 responses.

Discussions of student responses included the mandatory use of rubric language. This ensured that the committee members remained focused on the specific requirements of each score point in each domain. DRC PAS staff took notes addressing how and why committees arrived at score point decisions and how each range of scores was defined. This information was used by the scoring directors and team leaders during reader training.

4.2 TRAINING MATERIAL CREATION

As part of preparation for the 2015 NeSA-Writing assessment, DRC's PAS staff assembled the committee scored rangefinding responses into sets used for training readers. Responses that the rangefinding committee had a strong consensus and were relevant in terms of the scoring concepts they illustrated were annotated and included as anchor papers in a scoring guide. The full range of each score point in each domain was clearly represented and annotated in the Scoring Guide. These anchor papers, along with the grade specific analytic rubric, served as the readers' constant reference throughout the project.

Training and qualifying sets were assembled using the remaining student responses that were reviewed and scored by rangefinding committee members. Responses were selected for training to show readers the ranges for each score point in each domain and to highlight some of the writing characteristics within each domain.

Validity papers were selected from current operational student responses, and consensus scored by DRC PAS staff and NDE representatives. These papers were entered into the imaging system in preparation for being scored by all readers. These pre-scored responses were dealt out intermittently to all readers throughout the project as a quality control process. The readers were unaware that these responses served as validity papers with the objective of ensuring that readers scored student responses in a manner consistent with their training and with Nebraska statewide standards throughout the duration of the project.

4.3 READER RECRUITMENT/QUALIFICATIONS

DRC retains a pool of experienced readers from year to year and all of the 2015 NeSA-Writing readers came from this population. Every reader had at least one year of previous scoring experience with Nebraska writing.

The Scoring Director and Team Leaders were chosen by the content specialists from a pool, consisting of experienced individuals who are proven successful readers and leaders, and who had strong backgrounds in Nebraska writing. Those selected demonstrated organization, leadership, and management skills. All scoring personnel were required to sign confidentiality agreements before any training or handling of secure materials began.

4.4 TEAM LEADER AND READER TRAINING

Representatives from NDE travelled to the DRC Plymouth, Minnesota Scoring Center (February 5- 20, 2015) to collaborate with DRC Scoring Directors and Team Leaders during three-day training sessions. The content specialist, scoring director, 4 team leaders, and a representative from NDE worked cooperatively to review and discuss all of the training materials, and to consensus score a number of additional validity papers for each grade. Team leaders were required to annotate all of their training materials with notes from the training sessions. To

facilitate scoring consistency, it was imperative that each team leader imparted the same rationale for each response as the other team leaders used.

Two days of reader training took place on February 10-11, 2015 for grades 8 and 11, and February 17-18, 2015 for grade 4, at the DRC Scoring Center. Reader training began with the scoring director providing an intensive review of the analytic scoring rubric, and the anchor papers in the scoring guide. Next, readers practiced by independently scoring the responses in the training sets. After each training set, the scoring director or team leaders led a thorough discussion of the responses, either in a room-wide or small-group setting.

Once the scoring rubric, anchor sets, and training sets were thoroughly discussed, each rater was required to demonstrate understanding of the scoring criteria by qualifying (i.e., scoring with acceptable agreement to the true scores) on at least one of the qualifying sets. Readers who failed to achieve 70% exact agreement on the first qualifying set were given additional, individual training. Readers who did not perform at the required level of agreement by the end of the qualifying process were not allowed to score any student responses. These individuals were removed from the pool of potential readers in DRC's imaging system and released from the project. 38 readers were qualified to score Nebraska grade 4 student writing responses, 35 readers were qualified to score Nebraska grade 8 student writing responses, and 33 readers were qualified to score Nebraska grade 11 student writing responses.

Following training and qualifying, a period of paired scoring took place, when readers were required to work cooperatively to score live responses and discuss and agree on the appropriate score. Once team leaders were satisfied with their performance, the readers were permitted to score independently while being monitored closely.

4.5 HANDSCORING PROCESS

Student responses were scored blindly and independently by multiple readers using DRC's handscoring system. Readers were not able to see demographic information pertaining to the student being scored, nor were they able to see any of the other scores given by any other reader. Each reader was required to apply the analytic scoring rubric to a given writing response and was instructed to avoid any bias in their scoring decisions. Each student paper was scored twice and non-adjacent scores were adjudicated. Data collected from the multiple reads were used to calculate the rater agreement rates and score point distributions. Student responses that were considered non-scoreable (Blank, Refusal, Off-Topic, Foreign Language, Illegible/Incoherent, Insufficient, Copy of Prompt), were automatically routed to the scoring director for review, and then to a content specialist for final approval. Those foreign language papers that were identified as being written in Spanish were then scored by a select group of qualified readers and team leaders who are DRC's specialist Spanish scorers. 80 grade 11 responses were written in a foreign language, of which 72 were Spanish. 131 grade 8 responses were written in a foreign language, of which 86 were Spanish. 133 grade 4 responses were written in a foreign language, of which 89 were Spanish.

4.6 QUALITY CONTROL

Validity sets

NDE approved/scored validity responses that were added into the Image Handscoring System for daily quality control checks. These pre-scored responses helped to track consistency over time, and how well individual readers were performing.

Recalibration Tests

During the course of scoring, two recalibration sets were produced using pre-determined scored student responses, and administered to readers as a way to address any scoring issues, and as a method of reinforcing the Nebraska scoring standards set out in the rubric.

Monitoring and Read-Behinds

Team leaders conducted routine read-behinds for every member of their teams and provided feedback and assistance to their readers.

Statistical Handscoring Reports

Numerous quality control reports were produced on demand or run daily in order to maintain high standards of scoring accuracy. The Reader Monitor Report and Score Point Distribution Report were especially helpful in analyzing scoring data and maintaining high standards of scoring quality.

Table 4.6.1 Reader Agreement rates for NeSA-W 2015

GRADE	IDEAS/CONTENT			ORGANIZATION			VOICE/WORD CHOICE			SENTENCE FLUENCY/CONVENTIONS		
	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ
4	75%	25%	100%	74%	26%	100%	74%	26%	100%	73%	27%	100%
8	78%	22%	100%	76%	24%	100%	76%	24%	100%	74%	26%	100%
11	76%	23%	99%	78%	22%	100%	77%	23%	100%	75%	25%	100%

Table 4.6.2 Score Point Distributions for NeSA-W 2015

GRADE	IDEAS/CONTENT				ORGANIZATION				VOICE/WORD CHOICE				SENTENCE FLUENCY/CONVENTIONS			
Percent at each Score Point	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4	2	31	57	6	3	32	56	6	3	29	57	8	3	31	54	8
8	1	20	59	18	3	22	59	16	2	21	57	19	3	23	55	18
11	2	15	61	22	2	11	67	19	2	11	65	22	2	14	64	20

Table 4.6.3 Validity Set Reader Agreement for NeSA-W 2015

GRADE	IDEAS/CONTENT			ORGANIZATION			VOICE/WORD CHOICE			SENTENCE FLUENCY/CONVENTIONS		
VALIDITY	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ	EXACT	ADJ	EX +ADJ
4	81%	19%	100%	79%	21%	100%	76%	23%	99%	74%	26%	100%
8	91%	9%	100%	89%	11%	100%	91%	9%	100%	89%	11%	100%
11	92%	8%	100%	89%	11%	100%	86%	13%	99%	87%	13%	100%

5. STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender, ethnicity, free or reduced lunch status (FRL), Limited English Proficiency/English Language Learners (LEP/ELL) status, Special Education status (SPED), and accommodation status data were collected for all students who participated and attempted the 2015 NeSA-Writing assessments. This summary of student demographics by grade is provided in Table 5.1. The table shows that for each grade, over 21,000 students took the assessment. Of those students across grades, half are males, half are females, over half are white, and less than one fifth are Hispanic. Among the students across grades, about 38% to 47% are eligible for FRL, 2% to 7% are LEP/ELL, and 11% to 16% belong to at least one SPED category. For all three of these programs/categories, the participation rate is lower for upper grade students. In terms of the test accommodations, there are about 6% to 16% of the students across grade and content area that report at least one type of accommodation (see row ‘Total’ for ‘Accommodation’ in the table). Similar to the rate for FRL, LEP/ELL, and SPED across grades, the rate for accommodation is lower for high school students (Grade 11). Across all grades, the ‘Timing/Schedule/Setting’ is the most utilized accommodation (about 6-10% for Grade 4 and 8, and 4% for Grade 11), followed by the ‘Indirect Linguistic Support in grade 4 (6%) and for grades 8 and 11, ‘Response’ (about 3-5%).

Table 5.1 NeSA-W Summary data: Demographics and Accommodations

		Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 11	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
All Students		22618	100.0	21886	100.0	21175	100.0
Gender	Female	11027	48.8	10724	49.0	10333	48.8
	Male	11591	51.2	11162	51.0	10842	51.2
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian/Alaska Native	272	1.2	340	1.6	250	1.2
	Asian	544	2.4	466	2.1	462	2.2
	Black	1562	6.9	1447	6.6	1280	6.0
	Hispanic	4099	18.1	3744	17.1	3335	15.7
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	29	0.1	24	0.1	29	0.1
	White	15277	67.5	15196	69.4	15239	72.0
	Two or More Races	835	3.7	669	3.1	580	2.7
Food Program	Yes	10532	46.6	9456	43.2	8018	37.9

		Grade 4		Grade 8		Grade 11	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
	No	12083	53.4	12430	56.8	13157	62.1
LEP/ELL	Yes	1662	7.3	509	2.3	396	1.9
	No	20956	92.7	21377	97.7	20779	98.1
Special Education	Yes	3655	16.2	2912	13.3	2355	11.1
	No	18963	83.8	18974	86.7	18820	88.9
Accommodations	Content Presentation	581	2.6	696	3.2	313	1.5
	Response	934	4.1	1097	5.0	583	2.8
	Timing/Schedule/Setting	2205	9.7	1379	6.3	802	3.8
	Direct Linguistic Support with Test Directions	677	3.0	249	1.1	151	0.7
	Direct Linguistic Support with Content and Test items	558	2.5	236	1.1	159	0.8
	Indirect Linguistic Support	1345	5.9	234	1.1	151	0.7
	Spanish	81	0.4	80	0.4	64	0.3
	Braille*	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Large Print*	4	0.0	5	0.0	4	0.0
	Total	3630	16.0	1949	8.9	1220	5.8

*Count represents the number of booklets ordered. This is not tracked.

6. REPORTING AND SCALING

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Nebraska writing scoring rubric uses one prompt, four domains, and two readers with scores of 1 to 4. If all scores were simply added up the result would be 25 discrete score points ranging from 8 to 32.

To create an equal-interval scale for the NeSA-W, scale scores were assigned to each raw score point through a linear transformation of the logit scores. Scale scores do not alter the relationships or the displays. Scale scores are the numbers that will be reported to describe the performance of the students, schools, and systems. They will define the ranges of the performance levels, appear on individual student reports and school accountability analyses, and be dissected in newspaper accounts.

The TAC felt that 200 points overstated the precision of the writing scores, because of the dominance of a few patterns. These considerations led to a choice of scale other than the 0-200 scale used by reading, math, and science. A 70-point scale was suggested, somewhat arbitrarily, as being less than 200 and different than either 50, which might be confused with a raw score, or 100, which might be confused with percent correct. Having settled on the choice of metric for the reporting scale, there is still a question of whether the weighted composite score is to be transformed linearly or logistically into the scale score. It is generally held that the logit (Rasch) metric, when it can be used, has better measurement properties than any linear transformation of raw scores.

The Composite to Scale Score tables can be seen in Appendixes G, H, and I.

A composite total score is calculated from the domain scores of each reader using the weights as shown below for the four domains respectively and summing the domain scores. The composite scores will be translated into scale scores which range from 0 to 70.

The composite score for 2015 is computed by combining the domain scores as:

$$CS = 1.4D_1 + 1.0D_2 + 0.8D_3 + 0.8D_4.$$

For example an 8th grade student could have received the following domain scores by reader:

	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Composite score
Reader 1	3 (4.2)	3 (3)	2 (1.6)	3 (2.4)	11.2
Reader 2	3 (4.2)	2 (2)	3 (2.4)	3 (2.4)	11.0

*Note: Weighted calculations are in parentheses.

The total composite score for this student is 22.2, which corresponds to a scale score of 40. This falls in the Performance Level *Meets the Standards*. A summary of the frequency distributions of the state scale scores for the NeSA-W is provided in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1.1 2015 NeSA-W State Scale Score Summary, All Students

Grade	Count	Scale Score		Percentile Scale Score		
		Mean	S.D.	25%	50%	75%
4	22618	43.5	11.7	38	43	50
8	21886	46.4	13.8	38	48	57
11	21175	47.4	13.2	40	46	58

As part of its deliberations concerning defining the performance levels, the State Board of Education specified that the *Meets the Standards* performance level have a scale score of 40 for all grades and that the *Exceeds the Standards* level have a scale score of 57 for Grade 4, 55 for Grade 8, and 53 for Grade 11. The standards defining the performance levels were adopted by the SBE per the standard setting and standard validation completed in 2012 for Grade 8 and 11, and in 2013 for Grade 4. Complete documentation of all standard setting events are presented in separate documents labeled *NeSA Spring 2012 Writing Test Technical Report*, and *NeSA Spring 2013 Writing Test Technical Report*, which may be found on the Nebraska State Department of Education website. Note that the scale score values that define the performance levels are fixed and will not change from year to year. The percentage of Spring 2015 students in each performance level are shown below in Table 6.2.

Table 6.1.2 2015 NeSA-W State Performance Level Summary, All Students

Grade	Below		Meet		Exceed	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
4	6645	29.4	13145	58.1	2828	12.5
8	6205	28.4	9187	42.0	6494	29.7
11	4943	23.3	9627	45.5	6605	31.2

DRC reported student results on the NeSA-W for grades 4, 8, and 11. Reports were included on the Individual Student Reports (ISRs) with NeSA- Reading, Mathematics, and Science and printed and shipped to districts/schools. Additionally, districts and schools were able to access online reports using DRC's eDIRECT system.

7. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

This chapter addresses the reliability and validity of the NeSA-W test scores. Reliability refers to the degree to which test scores are consistent over repeated measurements and validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests, according to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014).

7.1 INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

The ability to measure consistently is a necessary prerequisite for making appropriate interpretations (i.e., showing evidence of valid use of results). Conceptually, reliability can be referred to as the consistency of the results between two measures of the same thing. This consistency can be seen in the degree of agreement between two measures on two occasions. Operationally, such comparisons are the essence of the mathematically defined reliability indices.

One important reliability index is when we use a single measurement instrument, administered to a group of people on one occasion, to estimate reliability. In effect we judge the reliability of the instrument by estimating how well the items that reflect the same construct yield similar results. Thus, we investigate how consistent the results are for different items for the same construct within the measure.

Given the one-prompt, four-domain structure of the NeSA-W test, it is interesting to see how performance on one domain correlates to that on the other domains. One index that directly assesses the extent to which answers to one domain correlate with answers to other domains is the average inter-domain correlation. For a shorter test, the reliability index of the average inter-item (i.e., inter-domain) correlations is particularly important. Table 7.1.1 to 7.1.4 reports the inter-domain correlations for Grade 4, 8, and 11. The reliability of the average inter-domain correlations is presented in Table 7.1.5 for each grade.

Table 7.1.1 NeSA-W Domains

Code	Domain
D.1	Ideas/Content
D.2	Organization
D.3	Voice/Word Choice
D.4	Sentence Fluency/Conventions

Table 7.1.2 Correlations between Domain Scores: Grade 4

Grade 4	D.1	D.2	D.3	D.4
D.1	——			
D.2	0.91	——		
D.3	0.85	0.84	——	
D.4	0.78	0.79	0.86	——

Table 7.1.3 Correlations between Domain Scores: Grade 8

Grade 4	D.1	D.2	D.3	D.4
D.1	——			
D.2	0.89	——		
D.3	0.90	0.88	——	
D.4	0.85	0.86	0.87	——

Table 7.1.4 Correlations between Domain Scores: Grade 11

Grade 4	D.1	D.2	D.3	D.4
D.1	——			
D.2	0.90	——		
D.3	0.90	0.88	——	
D.4	0.86	0.86	0.91	——

Table 7.1.5 Form Reliability

Grade	Reliability
4	0.84
8	0.88
11	0.88

7.2 STANDARD ERROR OF MEASUREMENT

The Rasch model, which is used to analyze the writing assessment, provides asymptotic standard errors for each raw score. These standard errors are often referred to as conditional standard errors (CSEM) (Wright & Masters, 1982) to differentiate them from the standard error that is often used in the true-score model. These asymptotic standard errors for each raw score can be found in Appendix G, H and I. The CSEMs are presented in the scale score metric.

7.3 INTER-RATER RELIABILITY

Because the scoring of the writing tasks involves at least two independent readers, another source of random error is related to the variation across readers in the measurement procedures and interpretation of measurement results. To address these sources of error variance in rating measurements for reliability, DRC's Performance Assessment Services (PAS) follows a series of strict procedures in reader recruitment, reader training, and validity control, as is detailed in Chapter 4. As a result, the degree of agreement among raters, as provided in Table 4.6.1, is acceptable at about 75% exact agreement rate.

Further inter-rater reliability information is provided by the implementation of validity set as one of the PAS quality control procedures in scoring. As discussed in Chapter 4, the validity set is pre-scored responses helped to track consistency over time and how well individual reader were performing. As reported in Table 4.6.3, the exact agreement rate between readers on the validity set is approximately 80% on average.

7.4 DECISION CONSISTENCY AND ACCURACY

When criterion-referenced tests are used to place the examinees into two or more performance classifications, it is useful to have some indication of how accurate or consistent such classifications are. Decision consistency refers to the degree to which the achievement level for each student can be replicated upon retesting using an equivalent form (Huynh, 1976). Decision accuracy describes the extent to which achievement-level classification decisions based on the administered test form would agree with the decisions that would be made on the basis of a perfectly reliable test. In a standards-based testing program, there should be great interest in knowing how consistently and accurately students are classified into performance categories. Since it is not feasible to repeat NeSA testing in order to estimate the proportion of students who would be reclassified in the same achievement levels, a statistical model needs to be imposed on the data to project the consistency or accuracy of classifications solely using data from the available administration (Hambleton & Novick, 1973). Although a number of procedures are available, two well-known methods were developed by Hanson and Brennan (1990) and Livingston and Lewis (1995) utilizing specific true score models. These approaches are fairly complex, and the cited sources contain details regarding the statistical models used to calculate decision consistency from the single NeSA administration.

Several factors might affect decision consistency. One important factor is the reliability of the scores. All other things being equal, more reliable test scores tend to result in more similar reclassifications. Another factor is the location of the cutscore in the score distribution. More consistent classifications are observed when the cutscores are located away from the mass of the score distribution. The number of performance levels is also a consideration. Consistency indices for four performance levels should be lower than those based on three categories because classification using four levels would allow more opportunity to change achievement levels. Finally, some research has found that results from the Hanson and Brennan (1990) method on a

dichotomized version of a complex assessment yield similar results to the Livingston and Lewis method (1995) and the method by Stearns and Smith (2007).

The results for the overall consistency across all three achievement levels are presented in Table 7.4.1. The tabled values, derived using the program *BB-Class* (Brennan, 2004), show that consistency values across the two methods are generally very similar. Across all grades, the overall decision consistency ranged from the mid 0.80s to the low 0.90s while the decision accuracy ranged in the low to mid 0.90s. If a parallel test were administered, at least 85% or more of students would be classified in the same way. Dichotomous decisions using the Meets cuts generally have the slightly higher consistency values and exceeded 0.90 in most cases. The pattern of decision accuracy across different cuts is similar to that of decision consistency.

Table 7.4.1 NeSA-W Decision Consistency Results

Content Area	Grade	Livingston & Lewis				Hanson & Brennan			
		Decision Accuracy		Decision Consistency		Decision Accuracy		Decision Consistency	
		Meets	Exceeds	Meets	Exceeds	Meets	Exceeds	Meets	Exceeds
Writing	4	0.90	0.90	0.86	0.87	0.92	0.92	0.88	0.89
	8	0.91	0.91	0.87	0.87	0.93	0.93	0.90	0.90
	11	0.92	0.91	0.88	0.87	0.93	0.93	0.91	0.89

7.5 VALIDITY

Content validity addresses whether the test adequately samples the relevant material it purports to cover. The NeSA-W for grades 4, 8, and 11 is a criterion-referenced assessment. The criteria referenced are the Nebraska writing content standards. The assessment was based on, and was directly aligned to, the Nebraska statewide content standards to ensure good content validity.

For criterion-referenced, standards-based assessment, strong content validity evidence is derived directly from the test construction process and the item scaling. The item development and test construction process, described above, ensures that every item aligns directly to one of the content standards. This alignment is foremost in the minds of the item writers and editors. As a routine part of item selection and prior to an item appearing on a test form, the review committees check the alignment of the items with the standards and make any adjustments deemed necessary. The result is a mutual agreement among the content specialists and teachers that the assessment does in fact assess what was intended.

Evidence of this agreement is reflected in the success of the Body of Work standard setting processes (in the separate *NeSA Spring 2012 Writing Test Technical Report*, and *NeSA Spring 2013 Writing Test Technical Report*). Panelists participating in the Body of Work process read a sample of essays in a wide range from very low to very high levels. Discussions about placement

of each individual essay almost invariably focus on the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required of a typical student in each grade, and, overall, panelists were comfortable with the content coverage of each writing task.

As described in the *Standards* (2014), internal-structure evidence refers to the degree to which the relationships between test items and test components conform to the construct on which the proposed test interpretations are based. As discussed in Section 7.1, the inter-domain correlations are all positive and of acceptable magnitude. This also provided evidence that the four domains were essentially unidimensional, and supported the interpretations based on the total composite scores for the NeSA-W test.

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Appendix A: Nebraska Department of Education Scoring Guide for Narrative Writing – Analytic – GRADE 4

Nebraska Department of Education Scoring Guide for Narrative Writing – Analytic – Grade 4				
	1	2	3	4
IDEAS / CONTENT 35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer creates little understanding of events of the story. Content has many digressions from the topic. Supporting details are lacking. Storyline is often repetitious, disconnected, or random. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer creates a limited understanding of events of the story. Content has some digressions from the topic. Limited or unrelated details are included. Storyline is occasionally vague. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer creates a general understanding of events of the story. Content is generally focused on the topic. Adequate, related details are included. Storyline is generally logical and easy to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer creates a clear understanding of events of the story. Content is well-focused on the topic. Numerous, relevant details are included. Storyline is logical and easy to follow throughout.
ORGANIZATION 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of a beginning, middle, or end is lacking. Pacing is awkward. Transitions are missing or connections are unclear. Paragraphing is ineffective or missing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of a beginning, middle, or end is limited. Pacing is somewhat inconsistent. Transitions are repetitious or weak. Paragraphing is irregular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is functional. Pacing is generally controlled. Transitions are functional. Paragraphing is generally successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is effective. Pacing is well-controlled. Transitions effectively show how ideas connect. Paragraphing is sound.
VOICE / WORD CHOICE 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is lifeless and mechanical, conveying little sense of the writer. Voice is inappropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is neither specific, precise, nor varied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is occasionally expressive, conveying a limited sense of the writer. Voice is sometimes inappropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is occasionally specific, precise, and varied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is generally expressive, conveying a sense of the writer. Voice is generally appropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is generally specific, precise, and varied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is expressive and engaging, conveying a strong sense of the writer. Voice is well-suited for the purpose and audience. Language is specific, precise, and varied throughout.
SENTENCE FLUENCY / CONVENTIONS 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences seldom vary in length or structure. Phrasing sounds awkward and unnatural. Fragments or run-ons confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors throughout distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences occasionally vary in length or structure. Phrasing occasionally sounds unnatural. Fragments or run-ons sometimes confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors may distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences generally vary in length or structure. Phrasing generally sounds natural. Fragments and run-ons, if present, do not confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are usually correct and errors do not distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences vary in length and structure throughout. Phrasing consistently sounds natural and conveys meaning. Fragments and run-ons, if present, are intended for stylistic effect. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are consistently correct and may be manipulated for stylistic effect.

Appendix B: Nebraska Department of Education Scoring Guide for Descriptive Writing – Analytic – GRADE 8

Nebraska Department of Education Scoring Guide for Descriptive Writing – Analytic - GRADE 8				
	1	2	3	4
IDEAS / CONTENT 35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The picture of what is being described is unclear. Content has many digressions from the topic. Sensory details are lacking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The picture of what is being described is limited. Content has some digressions from the topic. Sensory details are limited or unrelated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The picture of what is being described is clear. Content is generally focused on the topic. Sensory details are adequate and related. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The picture of what is being described is clear and vivid. Content is well-focused on the topic. Sensory details are numerous and relevant.
ORGANIZATION 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is lacking. Pacing is awkward. Transitions are missing or connections are unclear. Paragraphing is ineffective or missing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is limited. Pacing is somewhat inconsistent. Transitions are repetitious or weak. Paragraphing is irregular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is functional. Pacing is generally controlled. Transitions are functional. Paragraphing is generally successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is effective. Pacing is well- controlled. Transitions effectively show how ideas connect. Paragraphing is sound.
VOICE / WORD CHOICE 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is inexpressive and lifeless, conveying little sense of the writer. Voice inappropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is neither specific, precise, nor varied. Few, if any, vivid words or phrases are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is occasionally expressive, conveying a limited sense of the writer. Voice is sometimes inappropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is occasionally specific, precise, and varied. Some vivid words and phrases are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is generally expressive, conveying a sense of the writer. Voice is generally appropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is generally specific, precise, and varied. Adequate vivid words and phrases are used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wording is expressive and engaging, conveying a strong sense of the writer throughout. Voice is well-suited for the purpose and audience throughout. Language is specific, precise, and varied throughout. Numerous vivid words and phrases used effectively.
SENTENCE FLUENCY / CONVENTIONS 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences seldom vary in length or structure. Phrasing sounds awkward and unnatural. Fragments or run-ons confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors throughout distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences occasionally vary in length or structure. Phrasing occasionally sounds unnatural. Fragments or run-ons sometimes confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors may distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences generally vary in length or structure. Phrasing generally sounds natural. Fragments and run-ons, if present, do not confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are usually correct and errors do not distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences vary in length and structure throughout. Phrasing consistently sounds natural and conveys meaning. Fragments and run-ons, if present, are intended for stylistic effect. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are consistently correct and may be manipulated for stylistic effect.

Appendix C: Nebraska Department of Education Scoring Guide for Persuasive Writing – Analytic – GRADE 11

Nebraska Department of Education Scoring Guide for Persuasive Writing – Analytic – GRADE 11				
	1	2	3	4
IDEAS / CONTENT 35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer conveys little opinion or position about the topic. Content has many digressions from the topic. Reasoning is unclear. Supporting examples or reasons are lacking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer conveys a limited opinion or position about the topic. Content has some digressions from the topic. Reasoning is somewhat logical and convincing. Supporting examples or reasons are limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer conveys a general opinion or position about the topic. Content is generally focused on the topic. Reasoning is usually logical and convincing. Supporting examples or reasons are adequate and relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer conveys a clear opinion or position about the topic. Content is well-focused on the topic. Reasoning is logical and compelling. Supporting examples or reasons are numerous and relevant.
ORGANIZATION 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is lacking. Pacing is awkward. Transitions are missing or connections are unclear. Paragraphing is ineffective or missing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is limited. Pacing is somewhat inconsistent. Transitions are repetitious or weak. Paragraphing is irregular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is functional. Pacing is generally controlled. Transitions are functional. Paragraphing is generally successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is effective. Pacing is well-controlled. Transitions effectively show how ideas connect. Paragraphing is sound.
VOICE / WORD CHOICE 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer demonstrates little commitment to the topic. Voice is inappropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is neither specific, precise, varied, nor engaging. Writer fails to anticipate the reader's questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer demonstrates a limited commitment to the topic. Voice is sometimes inappropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is occasionally specific, precise, varied, and engaging. Writer anticipates few of the reader's questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer demonstrates a general commitment to the topic. Voice is generally appropriate for the purpose and audience. Language is generally specific, precise, varied, and engaging. Writer generally anticipates the reader's questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer demonstrates a strong commitment to the topic. Voice is well-suited for the purpose and audience. Language is specific, precise, varied, and engaging throughout. Writer consistently anticipates reader's questions.
SENTENCE FLUENCY / CONVENTIONS 20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences seldom vary in length or structure. Phrasing sounds awkward and unnatural. Fragment or run-ons confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors throughout distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences occasionally vary in length or structure. Phrasing occasionally sounds unnatural. Fragment or run-ons sometimes confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors may distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences generally vary in length or structure. Phrasing generally sounds natural. Fragments and run-ons, if present, do not confuse the reader. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are usually correct and errors do not distract the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences vary in length and structure throughout. Phrasing consistently sounds natural and conveys meaning. Fragments and run-ons, if present, are intended for stylistic effect. Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are consistently correct and may be manipulated for stylistic effect.

Appendix D: Performance Level Descriptors Grade 4

Nebraska State Accountability-Writing (NeSA-W) Performance Level Descriptors Grade 4

<u>Below the Standards</u>	<u>Meets the Standards</u>	<u>Exceeds the Standards</u>
<p>Overall the student's writing reflects an unsatisfactory performance of the standards and an insufficient understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing is still under development. Extensive revision and/or editing is necessary.</p> <p>The student's writing is below the standards if the . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Writer creates a limited or no understanding of events in the story. o Content has some digressions from the topic. o Supporting details are limited, unrelated, or lacking. o Storyline is vague, repetitious, disconnected, or random. o Structural development of a beginning, middle, or end is limited or lacking. o Pacing is inconsistent or awkward. o Transitions are repetitious, weak, unclear, or missing. o Paragraphing is irregular, ineffective, or missing. o Wording is inexpressive and lifeless, conveying a limited sense of the writer. o Voice is sometimes inappropriate for the purpose and audience. o Language is seldom specific, precise or varied. o Sentences seldom vary in length or structure. o Phrasing sounds awkward and unnatural. o Writing has fragments or run-ons that confuse the reader. o Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors distract the reader. 	<p>Overall the student's writing reflects a satisfactory performance of the standards and a sufficient understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing demonstrates more strengths than weaknesses. Some revision and/or editing is necessary.</p> <p>The student's writing meets the standards if the . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Writer creates a general understanding of events in the story. o Content is generally focused on the topic. o Details are adequate and related. o Storyline is generally logical and easy to follow. o Structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is functional. o Pacing is generally controlled. o Transitions are functional. o Paragraphing is generally successful. o Wording is generally expressive, conveying a sense of the writer. o Voice is generally appropriate for the purpose and audience. o Language is generally specific, precise, and varied. o Sentences generally vary in length or structure. o Phrasing generally sounds natural. o Fragments and run-ons do not generally confuse the reader. o Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are usually correct and rarely distract the reader. 	<p>Overall the student's writing reflects an advanced performance of the standards and a thorough understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing demonstrates numerous strengths. Only minor revision and/or editing is necessary.</p> <p>The student's writing exceeds the standards if the . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Writer creates a clear understanding of events in the story. o Content is well-focused on the topic. o Details are numerous and relevant. o Storyline is logical and easy to follow throughout. o Structural development of a beginning, middle, and end is effective. o Pacing is well-controlled. o Transitions effectively show how ideas connect. o Paragraphing is sound. o Wording is expressive and engaging, conveying a strong sense of the writer throughout. o Voice is well-suited for the purpose and audience throughout. o Language is specific, precise, and varied throughout. o Sentences vary in length and structure throughout. o Phrasing consistently sounds natural and conveys meaning. o Fragments and run-ons, if present, are intended for stylistic effect. o Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are consistently correct and may be manipulated for stylistic effect.

Appendix E: Performance Level Descriptors Grade 8

Nebraska State Accountability-Writing (NeSA-W) Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 8

<u>Below the Standards</u>	<u>Meets the Standards</u>	<u>Exceeds the Standards</u>
<p>Overall the student's writing reflects an unsatisfactory performance of the standards and an insufficient understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing is still under development. Extensive revision and/or editing is necessary.</p> <p>The student's writing is below the standards if the . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Picture of what is being described is limited or unclear. ○ Content has some digressions from the topic. ○ Sensory details are limited, unrelated, or lacking. ○ Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is limited or lacking. ○ Pacing is inconsistent or awkward. ○ Transitions are repetitious, weak, unclear, or missing. ○ Paragraphing is irregular, ineffective, or missing. ○ Wording is inexpressive and lifeless, conveying a limited sense of the writer. ○ Voice is sometimes inappropriate for the purpose and audience. ○ Language is seldom specific, precise or varied. ○ Writing lacks vivid words and phrases ○ Sentences seldom vary in length or structure. ○ Phrasing sounds awkward and unnatural. ○ Writing has fragments or run-ons that confuse the reader. ○ Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors distract the reader. 	<p>Overall the student's writing reflects a satisfactory performance of the standards and a sufficient understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing demonstrates more strengths than weaknesses. Some revision and/or editing is necessary.</p> <p>The student's writing meets the standards if the . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Picture of what is being described is clear. ○ Content is generally focused on the topic. ○ Sensory details are adequate and related. ○ Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is functional. ○ Pacing is generally controlled. ○ Transitions are functional. ○ Paragraphing is generally successful. ○ Wording is generally expressive, conveying a sense of the writer. ○ Voice is generally appropriate for the purpose and audience. ○ Language is generally specific, precise, and varied. ○ Writing has adequate vivid words and phrases. ○ Sentences generally vary in length or structure. ○ Phrasing generally sounds natural. ○ Fragments and run-ons do not generally confuse the reader. ○ Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are usually correct and rarely distract the reader. 	<p>Overall the student's writing reflects an advanced performance of the standards and a thorough understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing demonstrates numerous strengths. Only minor revision and/or editing is necessary.</p> <p>The student's writing exceeds the standards if the . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Picture of what is being described is clear and vivid. ○ Content is well-focused on the topic. ○ Sensory details are numerous and relevant. ○ Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is effective. ○ Pacing is well-controlled. ○ Transitions effectively show how ideas connect. ○ Paragraphing is sound. ○ Wording is expressive and engaging, conveying a strong sense of the writer throughout. ○ Voice is well-suited for the purpose and audience throughout. ○ Language is specific, precise, and varied throughout. ○ Numerous vivid words and phrases are used effectively. ○ Sentences vary in length and structure throughout. ○ Phrasing consistently sounds natural and conveys meaning. ○ Fragments and run-ons, if present, are intended for stylistic effect. ○ Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are consistently correct and may be manipulated for stylistic effect.

Appendix F: Performance Level Descriptors Grade 11

Nebraska State Accountability-Writing (NeSA-W) Performance Level Descriptors

Grade 11

Below the Standards

Overall the student's writing reflects an unsatisfactory performance of the standards and an insufficient understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing is still under development. Extensive revision and/or editing is necessary.

The student's writing is below the standards if the . . .

- Writer conveys limited or no opinion or position about the topic.
- Content has some digressions from the topic.
- Reasoning is limited or unclear.
- Supporting examples or reasons are limited or lacking.
- Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is limited or lacking.
- Pacing is inconsistent or awkward.
- Transitions are repetitious, weak, unclear, or missing.
- Paragraphing is irregular, ineffective, or missing.
- Writer demonstrates limited or no commitment to the topic.
- Voice is sometimes inappropriate for the purpose and audience.
- Language is seldom specific, precise, or varied.
- Writer often fails to anticipate the reader's questions.
- Sentences seldom vary in length or structure.
- Phrasing sounds awkward and unnatural.
- Writing includes fragments or run-ons that confuse the reader.
- Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling errors distract the reader.

Meets the Standards

Overall the student's writing reflects a satisfactory performance of the standards and a sufficient understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing demonstrates more strengths than weaknesses. Some revision and/or editing is necessary.

The student's writing meets the standards if the . . .

- Writer conveys a general opinion or position about the topic.
- Content is generally focused on the topic.
- Reasoning is usually logical and convincing.
- Supporting examples or reasons are adequate and relevant.
- Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is functional.
- Pacing is generally controlled.
- Transitions are functional.
- Paragraphing is generally successful.
- Writer demonstrates a general commitment to the topic.
- Voice is generally appropriate for the purpose and audience.
- Language is generally specific, precise, varied, and engaging.
- Writer generally anticipates the reader's questions.
- Sentences generally vary in length or structure.
- Phrasing generally sounds natural.
- Fragments and run-ons, if present, generally do not confuse the reader.
- Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are usually correct and errors rarely distract the reader.

Exceeds the Standards

Overall the student's writing reflects an advanced performance of the standards and a thorough understanding of the traits of writing. The student's writing demonstrates numerous strengths. Only minor revision and/or editing is necessary.

The student's writing exceeds the standards if the . . .

- Writer conveys a clear opinion or position about the topic.
- Content is well-focused on the topic.
- Reasoning is logical and compelling.
- Supporting examples or reasons are numerous and relevant.
- Structural development of an introduction, body, and conclusion is effective.
- Pacing is well-controlled.
- Transitions effectively show how ideas connect.
- Paragraphing is sound.
- Writer demonstrates a strong commitment to the topic.
- Voice is well-suited for the purpose and audience.
- Language is specific, precise, varied, and engaging throughout.
- Writer consistently anticipates reader's questions.
- Sentences vary in length and structure throughout.
- Phrasing consistently sounds natural and conveys meaning.
- Fragments and run-ons, if present, are intended for stylistic effect.
- Grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling are consistently correct and may be manipulated for stylistic effect.

Appendix G: Composite to Scale Score Tables Grade 4

Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM
4	8.0	1	8	4	12.0	19	2	4	16.0	29	5
4	8.1	7	8	4	12.1	19	2	4	16.1	31	5
4	8.2	10	5	4	12.2	19	2	4	16.2	32	4
4	8.3	11	4	4	12.3	19	2	4	16.3	32	4
4	8.4	12	4	4	12.4	20	2	4	16.4	33	4
4	8.5	13	3	4	12.5	20	2	4	16.5	33	3
4	8.6	13	3	4	12.6	20	2	4	16.6	34	3
4	8.7	13	3	4	12.7	20	2	4	16.7	34	3
4	8.8	14	3	4	12.8	20	2	4	16.8	35	3
4	8.9	14	3	4	12.9	20	2	4	16.9	35	3
4	9.0	14	3	4	13.0	20	2	4	17.0	35	3
4	9.1	15	2	4	13.1	20	2	4	17.1	35	2
4	9.2	15	2	4	13.2	21	2	4	17.2	36	2
4	9.3	15	2	4	13.3	21	2	4	17.3	36	2
4	9.4	15	2	4	13.4	21	2	4	17.4	36	2
4	9.5	16	2	4	13.5	21	2	4	17.5	36	2
4	9.6	16	2	4	13.6	21	2	4	17.6	36	2
4	9.7	16	2	4	13.7	21	2	4	17.7	37	2
4	9.8	16	2	4	13.8	21	2	4	17.8	37	2
4	9.9	16	2	4	13.9	22	2	4	17.9	37	2
4	10.0	16	2	4	14.0	22	2	4	18.0	37	2
4	10.1	17	2	4	14.1	22	2	4	18.1	37	2
4	10.2	17	2	4	14.2	22	2	4	18.2	37	2
4	10.3	17	2	4	14.3	22	2	4	18.3	38	2
4	10.4	17	2	4	14.4	22	2	4	18.4	38	2
4	10.5	17	2	4	14.5	23	2	4	18.5	38	2
4	10.6	17	2	4	14.6	23	2	4	18.6	38	2
4	10.7	17	2	4	14.7	23	2	4	18.7	38	2
4	10.8	18	2	4	14.8	23	2	4	18.8	38	2
4	10.9	18	2	4	14.9	23	2	4	18.9	38	2
4	11.0	18	2	4	15.0	24	3	4	19.0	39	2
4	11.1	18	2	4	15.1	24	3	4	19.1	39	2
4	11.2	18	2	4	15.2	24	3	4	19.2	39	2
4	11.3	18	2	4	15.3	25	3	4	19.3	39	2
4	11.4	18	2	4	15.4	25	3	4	19.4	39	2
4	11.5	18	2	4	15.5	25	3	4	19.5	39	2
4	11.6	19	2	4	15.6	26	4	4	19.6	39	2
4	11.7	19	2	4	15.7	27	4	4	19.7	39	2
4	11.8	19	2	4	15.8	27	4	4	19.8	40	2
4	11.9	19	2	4	15.9	28	5	4	19.9	40	2

Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM
4	20.0	40	2	4	24.0	50	5	4	28.0	61	2
4	20.1	40	2	4	24.1	51	5	4	28.1	61	2
4	20.2	40	2	4	24.2	52	5	4	28.2	61	2
4	20.3	40	2	4	24.3	53	4	4	28.3	61	2
4	20.4	40	2	4	24.4	54	4	4	28.4	61	2
4	20.5	40	2	4	24.5	54	3	4	28.5	61	2
4	20.6	40	2	4	24.6	55	3	4	28.6	61	2
4	20.7	41	2	4	24.7	55	3	4	28.7	61	2
4	20.8	41	2	4	24.8	55	3	4	28.8	62	2
4	20.9	41	2	4	24.9	56	3	4	28.9	62	2
4	21.0	41	2	4	25.0	56	3	4	29.0	62	2
4	21.1	41	2	4	25.1	56	2	4	29.1	62	2
4	21.2	41	2	4	25.2	57	2	4	29.2	62	2
4	21.3	41	2	4	25.3	57	2	4	29.3	62	2
4	21.4	41	2	4	25.4	57	2	4	29.4	62	2
4	21.5	42	2	4	25.5	57	2	4	29.5	63	2
4	21.6	42	2	4	25.6	57	2	4	29.6	63	2
4	21.7	42	2	4	25.7	58	2	4	29.7	63	2
4	21.8	42	2	4	25.8	58	2	4	29.8	63	2
4	21.9	42	2	4	25.9	58	2	4	29.9	63	2
4	22.0	42	2	4	26.0	58	2	4	30.0	63	2
4	22.1	43	2	4	26.1	58	2	4	30.1	63	2
4	22.2	43	2	4	26.2	58	2	4	30.2	64	2
4	22.3	43	2	4	26.3	58	2	4	30.3	64	2
4	22.4	43	2	4	26.4	59	2	4	30.4	64	2
4	22.5	43	2	4	26.5	59	2	4	30.5	64	2
4	22.6	43	2	4	26.6	59	2	4	30.6	64	2
4	22.7	44	2	4	26.7	59	2	4	30.7	65	2
4	22.8	44	2	4	26.8	59	2	4	30.8	65	2
4	22.9	44	2	4	26.9	59	2	4	30.9	65	2
4	23.0	44	3	4	27.0	59	2	4	31.0	65	3
4	23.1	45	3	4	27.1	60	2	4	31.1	66	3
4	23.2	45	3	4	27.2	60	2	4	31.2	66	3
4	23.3	45	3	4	27.3	60	2	4	31.3	66	3
4	23.4	46	3	4	27.4	60	2	4	31.4	67	3
4	23.5	46	3	4	27.5	60	2	4	31.5	67	3
4	23.6	47	4	4	27.6	60	2	4	31.6	68	4
4	23.7	47	4	4	27.7	60	2	4	31.7	68	4
4	23.8	48	5	4	27.8	60	2	4	31.8	69	5
4	23.9	49	5	4	27.9	61	2	4	31.9	70	8
								4	32.0	70	8

Appendix H: Composite to Scale Score Tables Grade 8

Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM
8	8.0	1	7	8	12.0	16	2	8	16.0	27	6
8	8.1	7	7	8	12.1	16	2	8	16.1	28	5
8	8.2	8	5	8	12.2	16	2	8	16.2	29	5
8	8.3	9	4	8	12.3	17	2	8	16.3	30	4
8	8.4	10	4	8	12.4	17	2	8	16.4	30	4
8	8.5	10	3	8	12.5	17	2	8	16.5	31	3
8	8.6	11	3	8	12.6	17	2	8	16.6	31	3
8	8.7	11	3	8	12.7	17	2	8	16.7	32	3
8	8.8	11	3	8	12.8	17	2	8	16.8	32	3
8	8.9	12	2	8	12.9	17	2	8	16.9	32	3
8	9.0	12	2	8	13.0	17	2	8	17.0	33	2
8	9.1	12	2	8	13.1	17	2	8	17.1	33	2
8	9.2	12	2	8	13.2	18	2	8	17.2	33	2
8	9.3	13	2	8	13.3	18	2	8	17.3	33	2
8	9.4	13	2	8	13.4	18	2	8	17.4	34	2
8	9.5	13	2	8	13.5	18	2	8	17.5	34	2
8	9.6	13	2	8	13.6	18	2	8	17.6	34	2
8	9.7	13	2	8	13.7	18	2	8	17.7	34	2
8	9.8	14	2	8	13.8	18	2	8	17.8	34	2
8	9.9	14	2	8	13.9	18	2	8	17.9	34	2
8	10.0	14	2	8	14.0	19	2	8	18.0	35	2
8	10.1	14	2	8	14.1	19	2	8	18.1	35	2
8	10.2	14	2	8	14.2	19	2	8	18.2	35	2
8	10.3	14	2	8	14.3	19	2	8	18.3	35	2
8	10.4	14	2	8	14.4	19	2	8	18.4	35	2
8	10.5	15	2	8	14.5	19	2	8	18.5	35	2
8	10.6	15	2	8	14.6	20	2	8	18.6	36	2
8	10.7	15	2	8	14.7	20	2	8	18.7	36	2
8	10.8	15	2	8	14.8	20	2	8	18.8	36	2
8	10.9	15	2	8	14.9	20	2	8	18.9	36	2
8	11.0	15	2	8	15.0	20	2	8	19.0	36	2
8	11.1	15	2	8	15.1	21	2	8	19.1	36	2
8	11.2	15	2	8	15.2	21	3	8	19.2	36	2
8	11.3	15	2	8	15.3	21	3	8	19.3	36	2
8	11.4	16	2	8	15.4	22	3	8	19.4	37	2
8	11.5	16	2	8	15.5	22	3	8	19.5	37	2
8	11.6	16	2	8	15.6	23	3	8	19.6	37	2
8	11.7	16	2	8	15.7	23	4	8	19.7	37	2
8	11.8	16	2	8	15.8	24	5	8	19.8	37	2
8	11.9	16	2	8	15.9	25	5	8	19.9	37	2

Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM
8	20.0	37	2	8	24.0	48	6	8	28.0	61	2
8	20.1	37	2	8	24.1	50	6	8	28.1	61	2
8	20.2	37	2	8	24.2	51	5	8	28.2	61	2
8	20.3	38	2	8	24.3	52	4	8	28.3	61	2
8	20.4	38	2	8	24.4	53	4	8	28.4	61	2
8	20.5	38	2	8	24.5	53	3	8	28.5	61	2
8	20.6	38	2	8	24.6	54	3	8	28.6	62	2
8	20.7	38	2	8	24.7	54	3	8	28.7	62	2
8	20.8	38	2	8	24.8	55	3	8	28.8	62	2
8	20.9	38	2	8	24.9	55	3	8	28.9	62	2
8	21.0	38	2	8	25.0	55	3	8	29.0	62	2
8	21.1	39	2	8	25.1	55	2	8	29.1	62	2
8	21.2	39	2	8	25.2	56	2	8	29.2	62	2
8	21.3	39	2	8	25.3	56	2	8	29.3	63	2
8	21.4	39	2	8	25.4	56	2	8	29.4	63	2
8	21.5	39	2	8	25.5	56	2	8	29.5	63	2
8	21.6	39	2	8	25.6	57	2	8	29.6	63	2
8	21.7	39	2	8	25.7	57	2	8	29.7	63	2
8	21.8	40	2	8	25.8	57	2	8	29.8	63	2
8	21.9	40	2	8	25.9	57	2	8	29.9	64	2
8	22.0	40	2	8	26.0	57	2	8	30.0	64	2
8	22.1	40	2	8	26.1	58	2	8	30.1	64	2
8	22.2	40	2	8	26.2	58	2	8	30.2	64	2
8	22.3	40	2	8	26.3	58	2	8	30.3	64	2
8	22.4	40	2	8	26.4	58	2	8	30.4	65	2
8	22.5	41	2	8	26.5	58	2	8	30.5	65	2
8	22.6	41	2	8	26.6	58	2	8	30.6	65	2
8	22.7	41	2	8	26.7	59	2	8	30.7	65	2
8	22.8	41	2	8	26.8	59	2	8	30.8	66	2
8	22.9	42	2	8	26.9	59	2	8	30.9	66	2
8	23.0	42	2	8	27.0	59	2	8	31.0	66	3
8	23.1	42	3	8	27.1	59	2	8	31.1	66	3
8	23.2	42	3	8	27.2	59	2	8	31.2	67	3
8	23.3	43	3	8	27.3	60	2	8	31.3	67	3
8	23.4	43	3	8	27.4	60	2	8	31.4	67	3
8	23.5	43	3	8	27.5	60	2	8	31.5	68	3
8	23.6	44	4	8	27.6	60	2	8	31.6	68	4
8	23.7	45	4	8	27.7	60	2	8	31.7	69	4
8	23.8	45	5	8	27.8	60	2	8	31.8	70	5
8	23.9	47	6	8	27.9	60	2	8	31.9	70	7
								8	32.0	70	7

Appendix I: Composite to Scale Score Tables Grade 11

Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM
11	8.0	1	8	11	12.0	17	2	11	16.0	25	3
11	8.1	5	8	11	12.1	17	2	11	16.1	26	3
11	8.2	7	5	11	12.2	17	2	11	16.2	26	3
11	8.3	8	4	11	12.3	17	2	11	16.3	27	3
11	8.4	9	4	11	12.4	17	2	11	16.4	27	3
11	8.5	9	4	11	12.5	17	2	11	16.5	28	3
11	8.6	10	3	11	12.6	17	2	11	16.6	28	3
11	8.7	10	3	11	12.7	18	2	11	16.7	28	3
11	8.8	11	3	11	12.8	18	2	11	16.8	29	3
11	8.9	11	3	11	12.9	18	2	11	16.9	29	3
11	9.0	11	3	11	13.0	18	2	11	17.0	29	2
11	9.1	11	3	11	13.1	18	2	11	17.1	29	2
11	9.2	12	2	11	13.2	18	2	11	17.2	30	2
11	9.3	12	2	11	13.3	18	2	11	17.3	30	2
11	9.4	12	2	11	13.4	19	2	11	17.4	30	2
11	9.5	12	2	11	13.5	19	2	11	17.5	30	2
11	9.6	13	2	11	13.6	19	2	11	17.6	31	2
11	9.7	13	2	11	13.7	19	2	11	17.7	31	2
11	9.8	13	2	11	13.8	19	2	11	17.8	31	2
11	9.9	13	2	11	13.9	19	2	11	17.9	31	2
11	10.0	13	2	11	14.0	20	2	11	18.0	31	2
11	10.1	14	2	11	14.1	20	2	11	18.1	31	2
11	10.2	14	2	11	14.2	20	2	11	18.2	32	2
11	10.3	14	2	11	14.3	20	2	11	18.3	32	2
11	10.4	14	2	11	14.4	20	2	11	18.4	32	2
11	10.5	14	2	11	14.5	21	2	11	18.5	32	2
11	10.6	14	2	11	14.6	21	2	11	18.6	32	2
11	10.7	15	2	11	14.7	21	2	11	18.7	32	2
11	10.8	15	2	11	14.8	21	2	11	18.8	33	2
11	10.9	15	2	11	14.9	21	2	11	18.9	33	2
11	11.0	15	2	11	15.0	22	2	11	19.0	33	2
11	11.1	15	2	11	15.1	22	3	11	19.1	33	2
11	11.2	15	2	11	15.2	22	3	11	19.2	33	2
11	11.3	16	2	11	15.3	23	3	11	19.3	33	2
11	11.4	16	2	11	15.4	23	3	11	19.4	33	2
11	11.5	16	2	11	15.5	23	3	11	19.5	34	2
11	11.6	16	2	11	15.6	24	3	11	19.6	34	2
11	11.7	16	2	11	15.7	24	3	11	19.7	34	2
11	11.8	16	2	11	15.8	25	3	11	19.8	34	2
11	11.9	16	2	11	15.9	25	3	11	19.9	34	2

Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM	Grade	Composite Score	Scale Score	CSEM
11	20.0	34	2	11	24.0	46	6	11	28.0	59	2
11	20.1	34	2	11	24.1	47	5	11	28.1	60	2
11	20.2	35	2	11	24.2	48	5	11	28.2	60	2
11	20.3	35	2	11	24.3	49	4	11	28.3	60	2
11	20.4	35	2	11	24.4	50	4	11	28.4	60	2
11	20.5	35	2	11	24.5	51	4	11	28.5	61	2
11	20.6	35	2	11	24.6	51	3	11	28.6	61	2
11	20.7	35	2	11	24.7	51	3	11	28.7	61	2
11	20.8	35	2	11	24.8	52	3	11	28.8	61	2
11	20.9	36	2	11	24.9	52	3	11	28.9	61	2
11	21.0	36	2	11	25.0	53	3	11	29.0	62	2
11	21.1	36	2	11	25.1	53	3	11	29.1	62	2
11	21.2	36	2	11	25.2	53	3	11	29.2	62	2
11	21.3	36	2	11	25.3	53	3	11	29.3	62	2
11	21.4	36	2	11	25.4	54	2	11	29.4	62	2
11	21.5	36	2	11	25.5	54	2	11	29.5	63	2
11	21.6	37	2	11	25.6	54	2	11	29.6	63	2
11	21.7	37	2	11	25.7	54	2	11	29.7	63	2
11	21.8	37	2	11	25.8	55	2	11	29.8	63	2
11	21.9	37	2	11	25.9	55	2	11	29.9	64	2
11	22.0	37	2	11	26.0	55	2	11	30.0	64	2
11	22.1	37	2	11	26.1	55	2	11	30.1	64	2
11	22.2	38	2	11	26.2	55	2	11	30.2	64	2
11	22.3	38	2	11	26.3	56	2	11	30.3	64	2
11	22.4	38	2	11	26.4	56	2	11	30.4	65	2
11	22.5	38	2	11	26.5	56	2	11	30.5	65	2
11	22.6	39	2	11	26.6	56	2	11	30.6	65	2
11	22.7	39	2	11	26.7	57	2	11	30.7	65	3
11	22.8	39	2	11	26.8	57	2	11	30.8	66	3
11	22.9	39	3	11	26.9	57	2	11	30.9	66	3
11	23.0	40	3	11	27.0	57	2	11	31.0	66	3
11	23.1	40	3	11	27.1	57	2	11	31.1	67	3
11	23.2	40	3	11	27.2	58	2	11	31.2	67	3
11	23.3	40	3	11	27.3	58	2	11	31.3	67	3
11	23.4	41	3	11	27.4	58	2	11	31.4	68	3
11	23.5	41	3	11	27.5	58	2	11	31.5	68	4
11	23.6	42	4	11	27.6	59	2	11	31.6	69	4
11	23.7	43	4	11	27.7	59	2	11	31.7	70	5
11	23.8	43	5	11	27.8	59	2	11	31.8	70	5
11	23.9	45	5	11	27.9	59	2	11	31.9	70	8
								11	32.0	70	8