

Example
Independent Writing
Items

ELA Indicator 2.1.b

Compiled from the Grade Level NeSA ELA Samplers

(Grades 3-8, 11)

2.1.b

Grade Level Indicators	
3.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a clear introduction, body, and conclusion with appropriate transitions.
4.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a clear introduction, body, and conclusion with appropriate transitions.
5.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions linked to the purpose of the composition.
6.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions linked to the purpose of the composition.
7.2.1.b	Generate a draft that conveys complex ideas through analysis and use of organizational patterns that are suited to the purpose and intended audience and includes a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions linked to the purpose of the composition.
8.2.1.b	Generate a draft that conveys complex ideas through analysis and use of organizational patterns that are suited to the purpose and intended audience and includes a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions linked to the purpose of the composition.
12.2.1.b	Generate a draft that interprets complex ideas, raises relevant questions, solves problems, or evaluates ideas through synthesis, analysis, reflection, and use of effective organizational patterns that are appropriate to the purpose and intended audience.

INDEPENDENT WRITING ITEMS

17. This question has two parts. Answer part A, and then answer part B.

Read the paragraph.

I like many kinds of pets, but I think dogs are the best. Dogs can learn to obey when their owners say, “Sit,” or “Come.” Dogs wag their tails or bark when they are excited. They are easy to feed because they seem to like almost everything. Dogs need to go for walks, and walks are good exercise for dog owners.

Part A

Which sentence BEST concludes the paragraph?

- A. Cats are good pets too.
- B. All in all, dogs are the best pets.
- C. Some dogs shed lots of fur in the spring.
- D. In the end, every pet is someone’s favorite.

Part B

Why is your choice in part A the BEST choice?

- A. It is a fact.
- B. It restates the opinion.
- C. It states another opinion.
- D. It gives a fact that supports the opinion.

Item Information		
Alignment	3.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a clear introduction, body, and conclusion with appropriate transitions.
Answer Key	Part A: B Part B: B	Option Annotations
Depth of Knowledge	2	The student is asked to determine the sentence that best concludes the paragraph and then to identify why this is the best concluding sentence.
Focus	Conclusion	<p>Part A: Option B is the correct answer since it restates the author’s opinion that dogs are the best animals. Options A and D are incorrect because they are not specifically about dogs. Option C is incorrect because it is a general fact about dogs that does not support the author’s opinion.</p> <p>Part B: Option B is correct because the answer to part A restates the main idea that dogs are the best animals. Option A is incorrect because the answer to part A is not a fact. Option C is incorrect because the answer to part A is not a new opinion. Option D is incorrect because the answer to part A is not an additional fact.</p> <p>This item is worth 2 points. To receive full credit, the student must correctly identify the answers to part A and part B. To receive 1 point, the student must at least select the correct answer for part A. No credit will be given for a correct response to part B if part A is incorrect.</p>

INDEPENDENT WRITING ITEMS

17. This question has two parts. Answer part A, and then answer part B.

Read the paragraph.

In chess, there are six kinds of pieces: one king, one queen, two rooks, two knights, two bishops, and eight pawns. Each kind of chess piece moves a certain way. The object of the game is to checkmate your opponent's king. Checkmate means your opponent cannot make a move without his or her king being captured. At the same time, you must protect your own king. The more you play chess, the less difficult the game will become.

Part A

Which sentence is the BEST topic sentence for the paragraph?

- A. The most powerful piece in chess is the queen.
- B. The game chess is like checkers, but it is more complicated.
- C. Chess has become a popular program for schools.
- D. In recent years, computers have been programmed to play chess.

Part B

Why is your choice in part A the BEST choice?

- A. It states a fact and an opinion.
- B. It provides a reason to learn about the topic.
- C. It offers a reason for the opinion.
- D. It presents the topic and an opinion about it.

Item Information		
Alignment	4.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a clear introduction, body, and conclusion with appropriate transitions.
Answer Key	Part A: B Part B: D	<p style="text-align: center;">Option Annotations</p> <p>The student is asked to determine the best topic sentence for the paragraph and then to identify why this is the best topic sentence.</p> <p>Part A: Option B is the correct answer since it indicates that the topic of the paragraph is chess and provides an opinion that is supported by the details in the paragraph. Option A is incorrect because it is an additional detail about one of the specific pieces in the game. Options C and D are incorrect because they are ideas about chess that are not supported by any of the details in the paragraph.</p> <p>Part B: Option D is correct because the answer to part A provides the topic of the paragraph (chess) and indicates an opinion about the topic (it is more complicated than checkers). While Option A is plausible, Option D is a better explanation of why the topic sentence in part A is correct. Option B is incorrect because the topic sentence does not provide a clear reason to learn about chess. Option C is incorrect because the answer to part A does not offer a reason for the opinion.</p> <p>This item is worth 2 points. To receive full credit, the student must select the correct answer for both part A and part B. To receive 1 point, the student must select the correct answer for part A. No credit will be given for a correct response to part B if part A is incorrect.</p>
Depth of Knowledge	3	
Focus	Conclusion	

INDEPENDENT WRITING ITEMS

17. Read the paragraph from a story.

Danya stood in the long line in the lunchroom and looked around curiously while she waited her turn. The room was packed with students, but it looked like only those who had brought a lunch from home were eating. There were no school lunches at the counter yet. Danya wondered what was causing the delay. Then she saw a lunchroom worker come through the door from the kitchen, pushing a large cart full of fresh, hot food. The room erupted with cheers.

Choose the BEST concluding sentence for the paragraph.

- A. Danya was really hungry!
- B. Finally the food was ready!
- C. The other students in line were growing impatient.
- D. Danya wondered what the excitement was all about.

Item Information		
Alignment	5.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions linked to the purpose of the composition.
Answer Key	B	Option Annotations The student is asked to select the best concluding sentence for a paragraph. Option B is the correct answer because it is the most logical reason the lunch staff would appear with a cart of food and the students would cheer. Option A is incorrect because it does not logically follow the previous sentence in the paragraph. Option C is irrelevant now that more food has arrived. Option D is not plausible because the paragraph explains that Danya saw what happened to excite all of the students.
Depth of Knowledge	2	
Focus	Conclusion	

18. Read the paragraph from a story.

Sanjay felt elated—it was the first time that he had successfully swam from one end of the pool to the other without taking a rest or touching the bottom of the pool with his feet. Swimming over to the edge of the pool, he saw his friend, Seth, cheering and waving his arms in the air. For much of the summer, Seth had tried to convince Sanjay to try to swim across the pool, but Sanjay resisted. Eventually, Sanjay gave in and mustered up the courage to attempt to cross the pool. It was a week of awkward, and sometimes exhausting effort.

Choose the BEST concluding sentence for the paragraph.

- A. Seth dove in the water and challenged Sanjay to race him across the pool.
- B. Sanjay was proud he had gained enough strength to achieve his goal.
- C. Swimming had always been one of Sanjay’s favorite activities.
- D. Sanjay enjoyed sharing hobbies with his friend Seth.

Item Information		
Alignment	6.2.1.b	Generate a draft that develops a clear topic suited to the purpose and intended audience and organizational pattern, including a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions links to the purpose of the composition.
Answer Key	B	<p style="text-align: center;">Option Annotations</p> <p>The student is asked to select the best concluding sentence for a paragraph. Option B is the correct answer because it logically summarizes how Sanjay felt about the experience described in the paragraph. Option A is incorrect because, while plausible, it is an additional event that could take place in the story rather than a conclusion. Option C is incorrect because the events in the paragraph would imply swimming has been a challenge more so than one of Sanjay’s favorite activities. Option D is incorrect because the paragraph only talks about one activity Sanjay and Seth had participated in together.</p>
Depth of Knowledge	2	
Focus	Conclusion	

INDEPENDENT WRITING ITEMS

17. Read the paragraph from a student’s draft of a report.

Athletes at the university were not always known as the Cornhuskers, however. Their original nickname was the Old Gold Knights. Then the school adopted scarlet and cream as its colors. Through the 1899 football season, the athletes were known as the Bugeaters. This was an appropriate nickname in an agricultural region where bull bats were a blessing to farmers and a menace to crop-devouring insects. Still, the Cornhuskers did not emerge for another decade. Finally, at the turn of the century and after one less-than-glorious season, the university felt that a new image was overdue. The Cornhuskers came to stay.

Which sentence BEST begins the paragraph?

- A. The University of Nebraska has a proud and honored tradition in collegiate athletics.
- B. Some of the most exciting careers begin on practice fields at the University of Nebraska.
- C. The University of Nebraska may have one of the most recognized nicknames in college sports.
- D. It should be no surprise that the University of Nebraska offers advanced studies in agriculture.

Item Information		
Alignment	7.2.1.b	Generate a draft that conveys complex ideas through analysis and use of organizational patterns that are suited to the purpose and intended audience and includes a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions linked to the purpose of the composition.
Answer Key	C	Option Annotations The student is asked to determine the best topic sentence for the paragraph. The correct answer option is C because it provides the topic of college sports nicknames, which is supported by the information in the remaining sentences in the paragraph. Options A, B, and D are incorrect because even though they are about the University of Nebraska, they do not provide the specific topic of the school nickname.
Depth of Knowledge	2	
Focus	Topic Sentence	

INDEPENDENT WRITING ITEMS

17. Read the paragraph from a letter to city council.

City council members have proposed a new noise ordinance for the city. The new ordinance is an excellent idea. Noise has been a problem in my neighborhood for many years. Many people blare music through open windows until the wee hours of the morning. Often people ride by in cars or motorcycles with their radios playing at full volume. It is often impossible to sleep through such loud noise. Excessive noise can be harmful to people’s health, causing hearing damage and affecting blood pressure.

Choose the BEST concluding sentence for the paragraph.

- A. Therefore, I strongly support the new noise ordinance and plead with council members to pass it into law.
- B. The current ordinance is a weak one and is so vaguely worded that it is difficult to enforce.
- C. As a result, my neighbors close their windows at night, even in the heat of summer, and wear earplugs when they go to sleep.
- D. Persistent lack of sleep due to noise issues can cause a multitude of other health problems.

Item Information		
Alignment	8.2.1.b	Generate a draft that conveys complex ideas through analysis and use of organizational patterns that are suited to the purpose and intended audience and includes a strong thesis, body, conclusion, and appropriate transitions linked to the purpose of the composition.
Answer Key	A	Option Annotations The student is asked to determine the best concluding sentence for the paragraph. The correct answer option is A because it includes an opinion that is supported by the information in the paragraph. The opinion also serves as a solid conclusion that connects back to the introductory sentence in the paragraph. Options B, C, and D are incorrect because they provide additional information rather than a relevant conclusion.
Depth of Knowledge	2	
Focus	Concluding Sentence	

18. A student is writing an informative report about a hiking trip. Read the draft and complete the task that follows.

Three trails are clearly marked through Arrowhead Canyon. The Lower Trail is an easy, two-hour loop along the creek bed. Most of the trail is hard-packed earth, level and wide enough for three hikers—or any trio out for a stroll—to walk side by side. There are even a few park benches along the way. The Middle Trail is more challenging. In several places, hikers need to scramble over fallen timber or rugged rock outcroppings. The path up to and around the waterfall can be a little treacherous, but with a little determination and a sturdy pair of shoes, kids as young as eight or nine can hike to Mason Falls and back within four or five hours. I'm completely amazed by the Upper Trail. That hike requires a little more preparation and no less than 18 hours.

Which revision of the underlined sentence BEST maintains the tone and focus of the paragraph?

- A. The Upper Trail is an entirely different challenge.
- B. You have to see the Upper trail to believe it.
- C. The Upper Trail is too amazing to imagine.
- D. You must indeed travel the Upper Trail.

Item Information		
Alignment	12.2.1.b	Generate a draft that interprets complex ideas, raises relevant questions, solves problems, or evaluates ideas through synthesis, analysis, reflection, and use of effective organizational patterns that are appropriate to the purpose and intended audience.
Answer Key	A	Option Annotations The student is asked to determine which revision best maintains the tone and focus of the paragraph. The correct answer is A because it fits the informational tone of the paragraph. In addition, it is an effective transition into the sentences that follow in the paragraph. Options B and D are incorrect because they refer directly to the reader, which does not fit the structure of the rest of the paragraph. Option C is incorrect because it does not fit the context of the surrounding sentences.
Depth of Knowledge	2	
Focus	Draft Appropriate to Purpose and Audience	