

Important Information for 8th Graders

State Writing Test

NESA-Writing Test

The NESA-Writing Test is administered to all 4th, 8th, and 11th grade students in the State of Nebraska from Jan. 21-25th. The test is online and therefore typed. Students are expected to write a draft on the paper, and type the final copy online. The test is untimed, but students are expected to have the test completed before the end of the day. Most students will complete the test in 90 minutes.

Students respond to a prompt that requires **describing** a personal experience, place, time of year, person, or object. Description focuses on using sensory details (hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch, and feeling/emotion). Students are expected to produce a five-paragraph essay including an introduction and conclusion, and to stay on topic throughout the piece.

Assessments are scored and weighted based on the following categories:

- Ideas and Content (35%)
- Organization (25%)
- Word Choice / Voice (20%)
- Sentence Fluency / Conventions (20%)

What can I do to help prepare my child?

- You can have your child discuss a memorable/important place or event in their lives. Many prompts will focus on a place or time of year. You may visit the State Writing State Department of Education website at:
http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/pdfs/Former_SWA_Prompts_Grade_8.pdf.
Staying on topic has the greatest impact on ideas and content.
- Encourage your child to avoid using vague words in their writing and/or discussion (stuff, things, something, kinda, nice, good, etc.) that replace more vivid descriptive words. Students' vocabularies are often far greater than what they typically use in conversation and in daily work. Voice and word choice will improve if students avoid such general, dull words.
- Written homework (in all classes, not just language arts) should be read aloud prior to turning in; this will help reinforce solid editing and revision practices in their work. This will *greatly* improve conventions.
- Students should avoid starting every sentence the same way. It is common for students to rely on words like "I", "We", "They", etc. to begin many of their sentences in their essays. Revising beginnings will greatly improve sentence fluency and flow.
- Discuss using a pre-writing plan with your child such as a graphic organizer or outline. Students who use plans to map out their ideas will improve their written organization tremendously.
- The 8th Grade State Writing Assessment Analytic Rubric is located at
<http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/pdfs/FINAL%20analytic%20rubric.descriptive.pdf>