

***LOUISIANA EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup>  
CENTURY (LEAP 21)***

***ELA ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK  
Grade 8***

This document provides specifications for the grade 8 English Language Arts assessment. It describes the contents and format for each part of the assessment, the number and types of items, specifications for each standard and benchmark assessed, and sample items to illustrate the assessment of each standard. A general description of the English Language Arts assessments in grades 4, 8, and 10 may be found under “Test Design” at the beginning of this guide.

***SESSION 1: WRITING***

Session 1 consists of a writing prompt, in response to which students are required to write a composition. Students will be given a minimum of an hour and a half to plan, write, and check their work.

The mode of writing for the composition may be narrative or expository. Directions included with the writing prompt will state the following:

- purpose and focus of the composition
- intended audience
- recommended length of the composition
- important elements that will be considered in evaluation of the composition (e.g., composing, style/audience awareness, sentence formation, usage, mechanics, and spelling)

For ELA-3-M1, legibility is assessed through the scorers' ease of understanding what the student has written. Any legible composition is scored, notwithstanding quality of penmanship. Benchmark ELA-2-M5, “recognizing and applying literary devices,” is not assessed by the writing prompt.

Session 1 measures Standards 2 and 3, defined as follows:

## **Standard 2**

**Students write competently for a variety of purposes and audiences.**

- ELA-2-M1 writing a composition that clearly implies a central idea with supporting details in a logical, sequential order
- ELA-2-M2 using language, concepts, and ideas that show an awareness of the intended audience and/or purpose (e.g., classroom, real-life, workplace) in developing complex compositions
- ELA-2-M3 applying the steps of the writing process
- ELA-2-M4 using narration, description, exposition, and persuasion to develop various modes of writing (e.g., notes, stories, poems, letters, essays, logs)
- ELA-2-M6 writing as a response to texts and life experiences (e.g., letters, journals, lists)

## **Standard 3**

**Students communicate using standard English grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and handwriting.**

- ELA-3-M1 writing legibly
- ELA-3-M2 demonstrating use of punctuation (e.g., comma, apostrophe, colon, semicolon, quotation marks, dashes, parentheses), capitalization, and abbreviations
- ELA-3-M3 demonstrating standard English structure and usage
- ELA-3-M4 demonstrating understanding of the parts of speech to make choices for writing
- ELA-3-M5 spelling accurately using strategies and resources (e.g., glossary, dictionary, thesaurus, spell check) when necessary

## **CONTENT PARAMETERS**

Following are examples of content parameters for assessing ELA-3-M2, M3, M4, and M5.

### **Punctuation**

- Use of end punctuation
- Use of commas to separate terms in a series, to separate independent clauses in a compound sentence, to set off direct quotations, between day and year in a date, between city and state, to set off nouns of direct address, after an introductory word or phrase, after the salutation, and after the closing in a friendly letter
- Use of apostrophes with contractions and possessives
- Use of semicolon in a sentence to separate independent clauses
- Use of quotation marks in a direct quotation
- Use of periods with abbreviations

### **Capitalization**

- Capitalizing names and initials of persons, names of places, dates, months, and holidays, titles of respect, proper adjectives, geographical names, streets, cities, states, countries, names of companies, buildings, monuments, titles of books, songs, poems, etc.
- Capitalizing the first word of a sentence, first word of a direct quotation, the pronoun *I*, the salutation and closing of a friendly letter

### **Sentence Structure**

- Complete sentences, fragments, run-ons

### **Usage**

- Subject-verb agreement
- Use of verb tenses
- Adjectives and adverbs (e.g., comparative and superlative; "real/really" or "good/well" except with the word "feel")
- Pronoun-antecedent agreement
- Use of pronoun case
- Avoiding double negatives
- Usage of all parts of speech

### **Correct spelling of commonly used, grade-appropriate words**

## ***SESSION 2: USING INFORMATION RESOURCES***

In the second session of the test, students are provided four to six reference materials to use to answer a series of eight multiple-choice and short-answer items requiring use of the material. These reference materials may include:

- Articles (from encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, textbooks)
- Parts of books (table of contents, index, glossary, bibliography)
- Visual aids (maps, graphs, tables, illustrations, cartoons, schedules, diagrams, flowcharts)
- Computer information (such as a picture of a screen from an online card catalog or magazine index, Internet visuals, keyword search, pull-down menu)

All of the information resources are realistic, grade-appropriate materials that an eighth grader might find in a library and use in preparing a project or report. All of the materials are related in some way to a specific topic or issue.

With the reference materials, students receive a written description of a task, such as gathering information and planning to write a report. Reviewing the materials, finding information, and answering the questions should take no more than forty (40) minutes.

The Using Information Resources session measures Standard 5, as defined by the benchmarks listed below. All items reflect realistic uses of information resources.

### **Standard 5**

**Students locate, select, and synthesize information from a variety of texts, media, references, and technological sources to acquire and communicate knowledge.**

- ELA-5-M1 recognizing and using organizational features of printed text, other media, and electronic information (e.g., parts of a text, alphabetizing, captions, legends, microprint, laser discs, hypertext, CD-ROM, pull-down menus, keyword searches, icons, passwords, entry menu features)
- ELA-5-M2 locating and evaluating information sources (e.g., print materials, databases, CD-ROM references, Internet information, electronic reference works, community and government data, television and radio resources, audio and visual materials)
- ELA-5-M3 locating, gathering, and selecting information using graphic organizers, outlining, note taking, summarizing, interviewing, and surveying to produce documented texts and graphics
- ELA-5-M5 citing references using various formats (e.g., endnotes, bibliography)
- ELA-5-M6 interpreting graphic organizers (e.g., charts/graphs, tables/schedules, diagrams/maps, flowcharts)

## ***SESSION 3: READING AND RESPONDING***

Session 3 comprises four reading passages (including at least one fiction, one nonfiction, and one poem). Two or three of the passages provide a basis for students to compare or contrast them. Session 3 includes a variety of types of questions (multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay) measuring the content of Standards 1, 6, and 7. All reading passages are complete and authentic, either previously published work or well-developed text written for the test. Excerpts from longer works may be used if they are complete and fully developed.

**Fiction passages** (approximately 500–1,000 words) may include short stories, folktales, legends, myths, or drama.

**Nonfiction passages** (approximately 500–1,000 words) may include newspaper and magazine articles, autobiography, biography, editorials, encyclopedia articles, and transcripts of speeches. If appropriate, the nonfiction selection will include a visual of some kind (e.g., picture, graph, table, flow chart).

The lengths of one fiction and one nonfiction passage fall within respective ranges noted above. The poem and the fourth passage may be shorter than 500 words. The fourth passage may be in any genre or form (e.g., poetry, letter to the editor).

The reading level of each passage is appropriate to the grade. Passages with the highest readability levels are ones that are of high interest and on the shorter side, and/or ones representing examples of authentic literature widely anthologized at this grade level.

Session 3 of the English Language Arts test measures Standards 1, 6, and 7, as defined by the benchmarks cited below. Each standard is measured by a minimum of six (6) multiple-choice and/or short-answer items. The item types may be intermingled for a given selection, taking into consideration the cognitive level of the questions. Session 3 concludes with one essay question related to at least two of the reading passages. Students are given a minimum of an hour and a half to complete this session.

Session 3 consists of twenty (20) multiple-choice items, eight (8) short-answer items, and an essay. At grade 8, across all items in Part 1, the distribution is 30% for Standard 1, 20% for Standard 6, and 50% for Standard 7. The benchmarks designated for assessment for each standard are listed below with specific content parameters for clarification, where needed.

## **Standard 1**

**Students read, comprehend, and respond to a range of materials, using a variety of strategies for different purposes.**

- ELA-1-M1 using knowledge of word meaning and developing basic and technical vocabulary using various strategies (e.g., context clues, affixes, etymology, dictionary)
- ELA-1-M2 analyzing literary devices (e.g., figurative language, flashback, foreshadowing, dialogue) and story elements (e.g., setting, plot, character, theme, mood) within a selection
- ELA-1-M3 reading, comprehending, and responding to written, spoken, and visual texts in extended passages
- ELA-1-M4 interpreting texts with supportive explanations to generate connections to real-life situations and other texts (e.g., business, technical, scientific)

For Benchmark M1, items are closely related to the reading passages and do not test vocabulary in isolation. M1 is tested through multiple-choice questions involving application of grade-appropriate vocabulary (including multiple-meaning and technical words). For items on understanding the meaning of a word from context, clues to proper meaning are found in the sentence itself or in surrounding sentences.

Items measuring M2, M3, and M4 may be short-answer or multiple-choice questions. For M2, types of figurative language may include simile, metaphor, personification, idioms, and imagery.

M3 and M4 may be measured through questions about fiction, nonfiction, visuals included with the text, and/or other types of stimulus material (such as a graphic of a computer screen).

Note: Benchmark M5 (purposes for reading) is not directly assessed on the statewide test because the skill requires teacher observation in one-on-one interaction with students.

## **Standard 6**

**Students read, analyze, and respond to literature as a record of life experiences.**

- ELA-6-M1 identifying, comparing, and responding to United States and world literature that represents the experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups
- ELA-6-M2 identifying, comparing, and responding to a variety of classic and contemporary literature from many genres (e.g., folktales, legends, myths, biography, autobiography, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, novels, drama)
- ELA-6-M3 classifying various genres according to their unique characteristics

Taken as a group, passages represent a variety of literary genres and at least one represents American literature reflecting the experiences and traditions of ethnic group(s) within the United States. Items involve identifying characteristics of the selections and include questions that require comparing and contrasting; items do not simply require students to identify the genre of a given selection. All three benchmarks may be measured by multiple-choice or short-answer questions related to the passages.

## **Standard 7**

**Students apply reasoning and problem solving skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing.**

- ELA-7-M1 using comprehension strategies (e.g., sequencing, predicting, drawing conclusions, comparing and contrasting, making inferences, determining main ideas, summarizing, recognizing literary devices, paraphrasing) in contexts
- ELA-7-M2 problem solving by using reasoning skills, life experiences, accumulated knowledge, and relevant available information
- ELA-7-M3 analyzing the effects of an author's purpose and point of view
- ELA-7-M4 distinguishing fact from opinion and probability, skimming and scanning for facts, determining cause and effect, inductive and deductive reasoning, generating inquiry, and making connections with real-life situations across texts

All four benchmarks may be measured by multiple-choice or short-answer questions. Items measuring M2 may involve steps in problem solving but do not require resolution. Items for Benchmark M3 do not require identification of author's purpose, but instead focus on the author's point of view.

Note: Any items involving "recognizing literary devices" are tested in connection with ELA-1-M2, which requires students to analyze literary devices, rather than as an example under ELA-7-M1.

## ***SESSION 4: PROOFREADING***

In Session 4, students read text of 100–250 words that includes mistakes in sentence formation, usage, mechanics, and spelling. The text may be a letter, a narrative, an editorial, or an expository piece. It includes up to eight numbered, underlined parts. Students answer multiple-choice questions that require choosing the best way to write each underlined part (either by correcting the mistake or by indicating that the underlined part is written correctly as it is). Students are given a minimum of thirty (30) minutes to complete the proofreading section.

Session 4 measures Standard 3, as defined by the benchmarks listed below (except for ELA-3-M1 involving penmanship).

### **Standard 3**

**Students communicate using standard English grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and handwriting.**

- ELA-3-M2      demonstrating use of punctuation (e.g., comma, apostrophe, colon, semicolon, quotation marks, dashes, parentheses), capitalization, and abbreviations
- ELA-3-M3      demonstrating standard English structure and usage
- ELA-3-M4      demonstrating understanding of the parts of speech to make choices for writing
- ELA-3-M5      spelling accurately using strategies and resources (e.g., glossary, dictionary, thesaurus, spell check) when necessary