

Essential Skills

Work Sample Task Development: Reading

Requirements

Secure Maintenance

For work samples to be a valid assessment of student knowledge and skills, the work samples must be securely maintained, including when updating and/or replacing content. Students must not be able to access—or hear about—the work sample content prior to administration.

Aligned to Content Standards

Work samples must align with the state content standards for the skill area being assessed. Questions about reading selections must clearly provide students with opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in the content standards being assessed in the work sample.

Guidelines

- Within a school, multiple reading tasks should be used to prevent students from sharing information about reading selections between testing sessions.
- Ideally, students should be allowed some choice among reading selections or types of reading selections (e.g. topic choice, genre choice, etc.). Remember that, for the purposes of collecting work samples that demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skill of Reading, at least one of the two required work samples must be in response to an informational passage.
- Texts for reading work samples should be engaging and accessible.
- Prose selections for reading work samples should be approximately 1000 - 2000 words.
- Poetry and dramatic selections should be sufficient in length and complexity to allow for responses that can meet the standard on all traits of the scoring guide for literary text.
- All passages used for reading work samples should be at high school level.
 - *Informational Text:* The recommended Lexile® level for informational selections is around 1070 but could be between 950 and 1200 (The literary Lexile range would be similar, but see note below). Remember to use both

qualitative and quantitative measures to help determine text complexity. To access a rubric measuring the qualitative complexity of informational text, click on the following link: [INSERT LINK HERE]

- *Literary Text:* Literary selections may be prose, poetry or drama. Lexile scores for literary selections are less precise than those for informational text, since this readability measure is primarily based on sentence length and word difficulty. This does not account for content or concept complexity, which can make the passage easier or more challenging to read. To access a rubric measuring the qualitative complexity of literary text, click on the following link: [INSERT LINK HERE]
- Reading work samples should allow for margin notes, highlighting, graphic organizers, drawing, etc., in addition to written responses to questions. Scores on each trait take into account the entirety of student responses, whether in the form of margin notes, responses to open-ended questions, a completed graphic organizer, etc.
- Students should respond to approximately 6 to 8 prompts/questions per reading work sample. Best practice would be to include two questions for each of the three reading scoring traits (Demonstrate Understanding, Develop an Interpretation, and Analyze Text). Students may also benefit from the inclusion of a final opportunity to respond to a question something like: “Is there anything else you would like to comment on in response to your reading of this selection?”
- Variety of response modes (graphics, draw pictures)
- Give the task to students, then revise based on what you learn.

ALTERNATIVES

- Reading work samples may be on-demand or curriculum-embedded. Some on-demand tasks should be available for students who are close to graduation and need to demonstrate mastery of the Reading Essential Skill. However, teachers may wish to have students respond to reading selections in the regular curriculum in a manner that can be scored using the Reading Scoring Guide and then keep those work samples for future use in certifying Essential Skill proficiency. (Note: Responses to curriculum-embedded texts should **not** be permanently returned to students if the school intends to repeat the same work sample in subsequent terms or years.)
- As one option, two reading passages that are connected thematically or examine the same topic or subject might be paired together to form one task. This will allow students an opportunity to synthesize information and to make comparisons or point out contrasts, skills that are described in the Common Core. Do note, however, that these sorts of **paired passages count as just one work sample**. Care should be taken to include questions that not only show understanding of the passages individually, but also provide students the opportunity to discuss connections between the two.

- If carefully constructed, it is possible to create a task that can be scored both as a reading and as a writing work sample. Such a task could be similar to the Smarter Balanced Performance Tasks which include three or four related texts, a classroom activity, two to three “scaffolding questions,” and directions for completing an explanatory or argumentative essay. A task like this would likely require a longer time frame and would need to be administered over several sessions.
- When administering a task to a group or classroom of students, the use of a classroom activity could be helpful to engage students in a topic and provide them with a foundation and point of departure. This activity could involve the use of some sort of introductory material, such as a reading stimulus, a graphic or series of graphics, or a short video, followed by a classroom discussion.
- A variety of strategies are available to make tasks more accessible to students who might normally struggle to complete them. This could include having the student respond to questions by dictating to a scribe or having his or her responses recorded (assuming, of course, that the construct being measured is not BOTH reading and writing). For a more complete list of potential accommodations, consult the Work Sample Accessibility Guidelines located on the Oregon Department of Education website.