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Writing Item and Scoring Sampler

General Introduction
The Department of Education provides districts and schools with tools to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned to the state assessment system. These tools include academic standards documents, specifics of the assessment, and content-based item and scoring samplers. This 2005–2006 Writing Item and Scoring Sampler is a useful tool for Pennsylvania educators in the preparation of local instructional programs and the statewide PSSA assessments.

What’s Included
This item and scoring sampler contains multiple-choice items (based on embedded-error passages) and writing prompts that were used in the February 2005 PSSA Writing Assessment [Field Test]. These items and prompts are representative of the types of items and prompts that will appear on the operational 2006 PSSA Writing Assessment. Each item has been through a rigorous review process and is aligned to the state standards.

Purpose and Uses
The items and writing prompts in this sampler may be used as examples for creating assessment items at the classroom level, and they may also be copied and used as part of a local instructional program.* Classroom teachers may find it beneficial to have students respond to the prompts in the sampler. Educators can then use the sampler as a guide to score the responses either independently or together with colleagues within a school or a district.

Item Format and Scoring Guidelines
Each multiple-choice item has four answer choices and is connected to an embedded-error passage. A correct response to each multiple-choice item is worth one point.

The writing prompts are designed to take about sixty minutes to complete; although during an actual testing event, students are given additional time as necessary to complete their responses. The writing prompts are scored with both a 1–4 scale mode-specific scoring guideline and with a 1–4 scale conventions scoring guideline. The mode-specific scoring guidelines presented within this sampler were used to score each respective prompt. Actual (transcribed) student responses are used as samples to represent each score point.

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EMBEDDED-ERROR MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS:
GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of the passages and multiple-choice items is to assess students’ abilities to revise and edit written text. Each correct response is worth one point.

These multiple-choice items reflect Pennsylvania Academic Standards—Quality of Writing–1.5.11.E and 1.5.11.F.

1.5.11.E

*Revise* writing to improve style, word choice, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed.

1.5.11.F

*Edit* writing using the conventions of language.

- Spell common, frequently used words correctly.
- Use capital letters correctly.
- Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
- Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections properly.
- Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative).

SAMPLE PASSAGES AND ITEMS

There are three embedded-error passages in this sampler. Each is followed by a set of four multiple-choice items. Each item is preceded by a standards notation and followed by an annotation that provides additional explanation or clarification.

A correct answer is indicated by an asterisk.
Sample Passage 1

Read the passage below and then answer questions 1–4.

1 Although the octopus is often viewed as a vicious monster, it is actually a gentle and intelligent creature with many interesting characteristics. 2 While some octopuses in the extreme depths of the ocean reach gigantic proportions, most are three feet or less in diameter. 3 Many could fit on the tip of a person’s thumb. 4 Large or small, an octopus has the ability to camouflage itself by changing colors to match its surroundings. 5 This talent is not confined to a single color either; an octopus can match color patterns and even mimic surface textures. 6 Imagine a polka-dotted octopus!

7 Another fascinating physical ability of these animals is that they can flatten themselves and “ooze” like jelly through small cracks; octopuses as large as three feet across can slip through a crack 1/8-inch thick!

8 Furthermore, these animals are easily trained. 9 In one trial, a scientist continuously prodded an octopus in an attempt to elicit color changes. 10 The octopus refused to cooperate and was finally lifted from the tank. 11 As soon as the irritated invertebrate was in position to take a direct shot, it sprayed ink all over the scientist who had been annoying it. 12 There was no doubt about the octopus’s intentions as it only sprayed one person. 13 Even though other team members were within close range.

1.5.11.F

1. Which word should contain an apostrophe?
   A. persons in sentence 3 *
   B. its in sentence 4
   C. textures in sentence 5
   D. animals in sentence 8

All answer options end in the letter s, so the student’s first task is to decide which word is in possessive form. Then students must choose which requires an apostrophe in that form. Options C and D present plural nouns, words often used in their possessive form. Option B is in possessive form, but possessive pronouns do not require apostrophes. Only Option A (the thumb belongs to the person) is both possessive and in need of an apostrophe.
1.5.11.E

2. Which sentence would best conclude this passage?

A. In the Pacific Northwest, there is an octopus that spends most of its life in trees.
B. There are similarities between a squid and an octopus, but they are very different creatures.
C. Octopuses are intelligent and fascinating creatures and undeserving of their false reputation.*
D. The man who was sprayed is Dr. Thomas Cerny, an expert on octopuses and squids.

A concluding sentence should not introduce a new topic as Options A and B do. Option D adds a further detail to support the preceding sentence and would not work well as a conclusion. Only Option C revisits the beginning of the passage and remains general enough to be supported by the remainder of the passage; Option C is the best answer.

1.5.11.E

3. In sentence 8, the word Furthermore could be replaced with which transitional expression without changing the meaning of the sentence?

A. In other words
B. In addition*
C. On the other hand
D. As a result

Students are asked first to recognize the difference in meanings among the answer options (“In other words” restates; “In addition” adds; “On the other hand” contrasts; “As a result” concludes), and second, students are asked to apply logic in choosing the appropriate replacement. Option B is the correct answer as it most closely matches “Furthermore” in meaning; it also follows sentence 7 logically by expanding upon, or adding to, an idea suggested there.

1.5.11.F

4. Which is an incomplete sentence?

A. sentence 5
B. sentence 6
C. sentence 11
D. sentence 13*

The answer options reflect a variety of sentence structures for students to identify as complete or incomplete. Option A is a compound sentence (two independent clauses properly joined by a semicolon). Option B is a short exclamatory sentence that uses the understood you as a subject. Option C is a complex sentence (a dependent clause followed by a comma and an independent clause). Option D is the correct answer because sentence 13 consists of a dependent clause only, which cannot stand alone as a sentence. The clue for students is the words “Even though” at the beginning of the sentence; this is a signal that the clause is dependent and the sentence should be completed with an independent clause.
Sample Passage 2

Read the passage below and then answer questions 5–8.

Modern Americans have grown up with the message to brush their teeth every day. Hard to believe, but many Americans didn’t brush their teeth regularly until soldiers returning from World War II brought home the military-enforced habit. Today the toothbrush is so common that we don’t think of it as an unusual tool but imagine trying to clean your teeth without one!

Evidence from Egyptian tombs suggest that simple toothbrushes were made from pencil-sized sticks. The end of the stick was chewed until it became softened and brush-like. Known as a “chew stick,” this type of toothbrush is still used among native tribes around the world. The simple toothbrushes many of us use today have their origins in fifteenth-century China. These first toothbrushes used hog bristles inserted into bone or wooden handles. Europeans preferred to use softer horsehair bristles because they felt the hog bristles were too stiff. Unfortunately, the horsehair bristles were too soft to clean well. A satisfactory solution did not arrive until the DuPont Company invented nylon in the United States in the 1930s.

5. In sentence 3, a comma should be added after the word
   A. toothbrush.
   B. common.
   C. tool. *
   D. teeth.

Sentence 3 is a compound/complex sentence (two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause) that uses the conjunction but to join the independent clauses; proper comma usage requires a comma with the conjunction. Option A would place a comma between a subject and its verb, which is always an error. Option B places a comma before a that clause, also always an error. Option D suggests an unnecessary comma. Option C places a comma before a conjunction between two independent clauses and is the correct answer.
1.5.11.E

6. Which detail does not support details already presented in the passage?

A. Using sticks from aromatic trees added the benefits of a breath freshener.
B. The use of dental floss, toothpicks, and toothpaste also dates to ancient times.*
C. The bristles came from the necks and shoulders of boars raised in cold climates.
D. Nylon dried quickly and did not encourage bacteria growth as animal bristles did.

* Options A, C, and D are details that support sentences already introduced in the passage. Option A could easily follow sentence 5, Option C could follow sentence 8, and Option D could follow sentence 11. Only Option B introduces a new idea and would require supporting details of its own.

1.5.11.F

7. Which change should be made to sentence 4?

A. change suggest to suggests *
B. change suggest to suggested
C. change were made to are made
D. change were made to were making

* Students are given the choice of two possible verb errors. They must consider verb tense (should the verbs be in the present tense? Past? Progressive?) and in the case of Option A, they must also consider subject/verb agreement. Option B moves incorrectly to past tense (the evidence continues to suggest; it is ongoing, not confined to a specific time in the past). Options C and D offer incorrect versions of the simple past tense were made. Option A is correct because present tense is correct, and the s on the verb agrees in number with its subject (evidence is considered singular; therefore, its verb must be singular, suggests).

1.5.11.E

8. This passage should consist of three paragraphs. Which sentence should begin the third paragraph?

A. sentence 5
B. sentence 6
C. sentence 7 *
D. sentence 8

* Beginning a new paragraph signals a further progression of the main idea of the passage. Answer Options A, B, and D all continue a thought from their previous sentences: sentence 5 refers to the sticks mentioned in sentence 4, sentence 6 names the type of stick being discussed in sentence 5, and sentence 8 refers back to the simple toothbrushes described in sentence 7. Only Option C, sentence 7, moves forward from its previous sentence. In this case, the sentence moves forward in time; using the word today in sentence 7 is one clue that a further progression of the main idea is occurring.
1. Ann Bancroft and Liv Arneson skied across Antarctica pulling a 250-pound sled, a trip that spanned 1,700 miles and took 94 days. 2. When they reached the Ross Ice Shelf in February 2001, they became the first women ever to cross the icy continent on foot. 3. In training for the expedition, both had “bulked up,” gaining 15 pounds each. 4. This gave them a fatty reserve, which they would draw on for energy. 5. Braving temperatures of minus 35 degrees Fahrenheit and winds up to 100 miles per hour, they would need a high-calorie diet so their bodies would not lose critical muscle mass. 6. During the trip, their diet consisted of 4,000 calories a day. 7. (The average-sized woman should eat 1,500–2,000 calories per day.) 8. Bancroft and Arneson ate hot cereal with butter in the morning, nuts, dried fruits, and chocolate during the day, and freeze-dried foods such as beef stroganoff at night. 9. Since their course kept them on the ice for 8 to 14 hours a day, snacking and drinking every hour was necessary to keep their energy up and prevent dehydration. 10. The Antarctic is more arid than the Sahara desert, so replenishing body fluids was critical.

1.5.11.E

9. **Which revision of sentence 1 best restates the sentence without omitting information?**

A. Ann Bancroft and Liv Arneson skied for 94 days across Antarctica and pulled a 250-pound sled.

B. For 94 days, Ann Bancroft and Liv Arneson skied 1,700 miles across Antarctica, pulling a 250-pound sled behind them.*

C. It took 94 days for Ann Bancroft and Liv Arneson to ski 1,700 miles across Antarctica.

D. Pulling a 250-pound sled and skiing 1,700 miles for 94 days across Antarctica were Ann Bancroft and Liv Arneson.

*Students are asked to restructure a sentence without altering its meaning. They must choose the version that not only retains all the information from the original but also rearranges that information in a clear and coherent statement. Options A and C omit information (in A, the 1,700 miles is missing; in C, the fact that they pulled a sled behind them is missing); Option D retains all the facts from the original, but it presents an awkward construction with the subjects coming after the verb rather than in their more familiar placement before the verb. Option B is the best answer as it retains all information and arranges that information clearly.
1.5.11.F

10. In sentence 4, the word This refers to
   A. gaining 15 pounds.*
   B. training for the expedition.
   C. a fatty reserve.
   D. high-calorie diet.

   *This is often overlooked as a pronoun, but it is used to refer to a noun (its antecedent), which is what students are being asked to identify here. Students must use logic to choose the correct answer—what, exactly, gave the women a fatty reserve? All answer options are singular and all are linked to a “fatty reserve.” However, Option A is the correct answer because it is specifically the weight gain that provided the reserve the women needed.

1.5.11.F

11. Sentence 7 is in parentheses because it
   A. disagrees with the rest of the text.
   B. is of interest to only a few readers.
   C. has a less formal tone than the remainder of the text.
   D. provides an explanation that is not essential. *

   *This conventions item asks students to explain the use of parentheses in a sentence. A major function of parentheses is to add an aside or supplemental information, which is the case here—these particular women needed 4,000 calories a day (but, the writer adds, incidentally, the average woman needs only 1,500–2,000 calories a day). The parenthetical sentence provides additional information, information not essential to understanding the passage but interesting as an aside.

1.5.11.E

12. Which word is used incorrectly and should be changed?
   A. change women to woman in sentence 2
   B. change lose to loose in sentence 5
   C. change coarse to course in sentence 9 *
   D. change than to then in sentence 10

   *The answer options represent common word-choice errors. Students must determine the proper form of each word pair within the context of its sentence. Option A offers singular versus plural, Option B a verb (I always lose my car keys) versus an adjective (These shoes are too loose), and Option D asks students to consider what the sentence is doing: is it comparing two things or describing a sequence? The correct answer is Option C; a course is another word for a route, a trip, or an expedition. Coarse is an adjective that would describe a noun: someone could have coarse manners, a surface material could be coarse, etc.
WRITING PROMPTS: GENERAL INFORMATION

The greater part of the writing assessment consists of students’ written responses to writing prompts. Eleventh graders will write to two modes: informational and persuasive.

The writing prompts reflect Pennsylvania Academic Standards–Types of Writing–1.4.11.B, and 1.4.11.C.

1.4.11.B   Write complex informational pieces (e.g., research papers, analyses, evaluations, essays).
1.4.11.C   Write persuasive pieces.

SAMPLE WRITING PROMPTS AND STUDENT RESPONSES

There are two writing prompts (one at each mode) in this sampler. Written responses are scored on a 1- to 4-point scale, and student samples at each scoring level have been provided. These examples of student writing have also been annotated.

Each paper is scored twice, once for composition and once for conventions. Mode-specific scoring guidelines precede each group of student papers. The conventions scoring guideline precedes the papers that exemplify conventions scoring.
# WRITING

## PSSA INFORMATIONAL SCORING GUIDELINE

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<th>Organization</th>
<th>Style</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sharp, distinct controlling point made about a single topic with evident awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Substantial, relevant, and illustrative content that demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose. Thorough elaboration with effectively presented information consistently supported with well-chosen details.</td>
<td>Effective organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which develop a controlling idea.</td>
<td>Precise control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent and effective tone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clear controlling point made about a single topic with general awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Adequate, specific, and/or illustrative content that demonstrates an understanding of the purpose. Sufficient elaboration with clearly presented information supported with well-chosen details.</td>
<td>Organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which develop a controlling idea.</td>
<td>Appropriate control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent tone.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Vague evidence of a controlling point made about a single topic with an inconsistent awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Inadequate, vague content that demonstrates a weak understanding of the purpose. Underdeveloped and/or repetitive elaboration with inconsistently supported information. May be an extended list.</td>
<td>Inconsistent organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which ineffectively develop a controlling idea.</td>
<td>Limited control of language and sentence structures that creates interference with tone.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Little or no evidence of a controlling point made about a single topic with a minimal awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Minimal evidence of content that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the purpose. Superficial, undeveloped writing with little or no support. May be a bare list.</td>
<td>Little or no evidence of organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, which inadequately develop a controlling idea.</td>
<td>Minimal control of language and sentence structures that creates an inconsistent tone.</td>
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WRITING

INFORMATIONAL WRITING PROMPT

You will have up to 60 minutes to plan, write, and proofread your response to this writing prompt:

“Great thoughts speak only to a thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all humankind.”—Emily P. Bissell

How do “great actions speak to all humankind”? Write an essay that explains your understanding of this quotation.

Plan
Before you write:

- Read the prompt carefully so you understand exactly what you are being asked to do.
- Consider topic, task, and audience.
- Think about what you want to write.
- Use scratch paper to organize your thoughts. Use strategies like mapping or outlining.

Write
As you write:

- Maintain a clear and consistent position or claim.
- Include specific details; use examples and reasons to support your ideas.
- Use a variety of well-constructed, complete sentences.
- Use a logical organization with an obvious introduction, body, and conclusion.

Proofread
After you write:

☐ Did you support your ideas with specific details?
☐ Do the point of view and tone of the essay remain consistent?
☐ Check for capitalization, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and usage errors.

Go on to the next page to begin writing your response.
In the past years, there have been many significant adjustments that have made our world a better place for people to live in, especially in America. These changes and adjustments were influenced by the actions of our fellow citizens. Many times, these actions were risky and dangerous. But in the long run it is what turned America right side up again. Like Emily Bessell once said, “Great thoughts speak only to a thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all human-kind. There have been many people who thought of ideas that would benefit our world, but unlike those inspirational models they leave their ideas bottled inside. It is not these bottled ideas that have an impact on humankind but these implemented ideas can go a long way.”

Martin Luther King Jr. for instance felt that racism was wrong and something should be done to put an end to this nonsense that the color of your skin determines who you are inside. The idea may have come to him one day while sitting on the couch that someone should speak out and represent his race, but he did not let it go only as far as his thoughts. Martin Luther King Jr. himself set up a mission that he would speak out and try to wake up America and then persuade it that humans are human. Color is just a color everyone in this universe is a different color and he wanted the world to know that because of this a human should be analyzed by their character, how bad and how good, not how dark and how light your are, because no matter how you look at it we are all made up of the same thing. It was Martin L. King’s speeches and acts that helped others see his side.
clearly not the thoughts he once had at home sitting
on the couch.

Another influential person who spoke out to human-
kind by her actions was: Rosa Parks. Like Martin L. King
she felt that she should not be compared, analyzed, and
belittled by others because of the color of her skin. One
day while sitting on a bus she was told she had to
yield her seat to someone else because they were white
and that she should move to the back of the bus. She didn’t
have to get up because the person was sick, old, or
pregnant but because the person was white. We can
imagine what she was thinking, why did she have to get
up? Could their be a more legitimate reason other than
the color of her skin? Apparently there was no other reason
for she felt she didn’t have to succumb to such a request.
She decided she wouldn’t yield her seat to someone who
thought they were better than her because of a color. Until
this day we talk about the actions she decided to take
that day on the bus. It was her actions and not her
thoughts that made an impact on others.

Another role model who is not talked about nearly as
much as others but whose actions went a long way was
Roberto Clemente. Roberto Clemente was a well-known
baseball player admitted into the Hall of Fame. It is
ture he was admitted because of his ability to play
baseball but also because of his good deeds. Once there
was a tragedy that occurred in Nicaragua. An earthquake
left many cities almost destitute of both their basic
necessities and their hope. Roberto Clemente felt that
something should be done to help these people in dire
need, the feeling was so persistent that he felt

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.
He would himself help these unfortunate people of Nicaragua. He spent millions of dollars on necessary things for the people and on roads towards Nicaragua; his plane crashed killing him. Although he did not reach Nicaragua his actions did, for they touched the hearts of many. He also didn’t just think about what could be done but he actually went out and did it. We can see with these examples that because of the actions of others many lives were changed forever. Many times it was certain events that inspired them to act and if it wasn’t for those actions they took our world would be in disarray right now. This should serve as a lesson to us too. If we think of something that can help our world go for it because it is these great actions that speak out to all of mankind and go down in history forever as another great action by someone that helped better our world.
Composition Score 4

This essay has a controlling theme strongly stated in the introduction. Citing Emily Bissell’s quote, the writer refers to great actions as the “implemented ideas” of “inspirational models” like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Roberto Clemente. After illustrating in great detail the situations confronting the chosen examples, the writer tells how each person took action to change the world [“It was Martin L. King’s speeches and acts that helped others see his side clearly not the thoughts he once had at home sitting on the couch”]. This type of organization allows the writer to effectively emphasize purpose in writing, in this case, to interpret and explain. The writer also thoroughly examines the situation each example faced, embellishing each with details that illustrate their reactions in light of the Bissell quote [“She (Rosa Parks) didn’t have to get up because the person was sick, or old, or pregnant but because the person was white. We can imagine what she was thinking. . . . It was her actions and not her thoughts that made an impact on others”].

The vocabulary is rich and selective, and it works to advocate for the writer’s viewpoint. Verbs such as “succumb,” “inspired,” “wake up,” and “speak out,” along with sharp images [“bottled ideas”] and edgy phrases [“legitimate reason other than the color of her skin”], all carry an evocative tone that reinforces the writer’s message. Also the sentences are designed to influence the reader [“An earthquake left many cities almost destitute of both their basic necessities and their hope”].

This essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of composition skills in the informational mode.
“Actions speak louder than words,” a simple phrase that has been proven to be universally true. Throughout history others have been countless incendents when in order to change something, one must take action. Many injustices have been challenged by the action of a few.

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of action playing an important part in an issue is the racial rights movement. African Americans all over America found that their words were not powerful enough to fight the Jim Crow laws so they took action. Frustrated with the unfair rules on buses, African Americans boycotted buses, hitting the bus company hard in the pocket, and drawing attention to their cause. Rosa Parks’s story sent the media into a frenzy while shining light on a topic some may have otherwise ignored. Even a million letters to the editor about racial injustice couldn’t bring as much uproar about the unfair treatment of Blacks as the bold actions they took could.

Although some actions people take to get the word out about their opinions are used to better society, some have much darker intentions. Terrorists have found that unfortunately the only way for their message to be heard is through violence. It's horrifying, but it is true. The recent...
attacks on the world trade centers was a frightening reminder how much louder actions speak than words. In early 2001 the general public hadn’t even heard of the terrorist group Al Qaeda. However after they attacked us on its own soil, suddenly everyone was talking about Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden. There is evidence that they had threatened the United States, but since they didn’t seem too dangerous, their threatening words were not taken seriously until they did something.

Actions, whether they are good intentioned, spreading the word about injustices going on in our own country, or evil killing thousands of innocent people in order to draw attention to a cause, most definitely speak louder than words.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.
Composition Score 3

The writer clearly states a main idea in the introduction [“‘Actions speak louder than words’... has been proven to be universally true”]. The writer then uses two examples, the civil rights movement and modern terrorists, to support the main idea [“African Americans all over America found that words were not powerful enough to fight the Jim Crow laws so they took action” and “attacks on the world trade centers was a frightening reminder how much louder actions speak then words”].

Effective transitions are used to unify the essay. The third paragraph introduces the second example with a reference to the first example [“Although some actions people take to get the word out about their opinions are used to better society”].

There is some clichéd language [“into a frenzy,” “attacked the U.S. on its own soil”] and missed opportunities to elaborate (What exactly were the actions Rosa Parks took? What was the thought behind her actions?) that result in only adequate development and a controlling point that is not sharp and distinct.

This essay exemplifies adequate control of compositional skills in the informational mode.
If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.

Composition Score 2

The writer’s point is vague [“Great actions are more than just a thought”], and the writing that follows neither clarifies nor elaborates on this idea. In the second paragraph, the writer states, “Many people . . . have done great things. . . . people who do great things are great. And great actions will be rewarded,” but then fails to tell the reader who they are or what they have done. The entire piece lacks strong development and specific support. The language is vague, repetitive, and limited (the word “great” is used a dozen times in the twelve handwritten lines).

This essay exemplifies limited control of composition skills in the informational mode.
A thoughtful mind is always full of great thoughts, but you don’t need all of that to do good things. For instance, things as generous as picking up someone’s pencil or helping your mom do things around the house. You don’t need a thatful mind, great action speak to almost everyone.

Composition Score 1

The writer demonstrates minimal understanding of the task and the purpose. The brief statements are unsupported and attempt to rephrase the quotation instead of explain it. The example offered [“picking up someone’s pencil or helping your mom do things around the house”] is unattached and presents a lapse in continuity with the next sentence [“You don’t need a thatful mind, great action speak to almost everyone”]. The actions mentioned are thoughtful but hardly great actions. Essentially, the essay is confusing, lacks a beginning and an ending, and has an inconsistent tone.

This essay exemplifies little or no control of composition skills in the informational mode.
## WRITING

### PSSA Persuasive Scoring Guideline

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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sharp, distinct controlling point presented as a position and made convincing through a clear, thoughtful, and substantiated argument with evident awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Substantial, relevant, and illustrative content that demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose. Thoroughly elaborated argument that includes a clear position consistently supported with precise and relevant evidence. Rhetorical (persuasive) strategies are evident.</td>
<td>Effective organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position supported with a purposeful presentation of content.</td>
<td>Precise control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent and effective tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clear controlling point presented as a position and made convincing through a credible and substantiated argument with general awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Adequate, specific and/or illustrative content that demonstrates an understanding of the purpose. Sufficiently elaborated argument that includes a clear position supported with some relevant evidence. Rhetorical (persuasive) strategies may be evident.</td>
<td>Organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position supported with sufficient presentation of content.</td>
<td>Appropriate control of language, stylistic techniques, and sentence structures that creates a consistent tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vague evidence of a controlling point presented as a position that may lack a credible and/or substantiated argument with an inconsistent awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Inadequate, vague content that demonstrates a weak understanding of the purpose. Insufficiently elaborated argument that includes an underdeveloped position supported with little evidence.</td>
<td>Inconsistent organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position with inadequate presentation of content.</td>
<td>Limited control of language and sentence structures that creates interference with tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Little or no evidence of a controlling point presented as a position that lacks a credible and/or substantiated argument with minimal awareness of task and audience.</td>
<td>Minimal evidence of content that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the purpose. Unelaborated argument that includes an undeveloped position supported with minimal or no evidence.</td>
<td>Little or no evidence of organizational strategies and structures, such as logical order and transitions, to develop a position with insufficient presentation of content.</td>
<td>Minimal control of language and sentence structures that creates an inconsistent tone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many areas have laws that require motorcycle and bicycle riders to wear helmets. Do these laws conflict with your right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”? Take a position for or against these laws and write an essay supporting your view.

Plan
Before you write:
• Read the prompt carefully so you understand exactly what you are being asked to do.
• Consider topic, task, and audience.
• Think about what you want to write.
• Use scratch paper to organize your thoughts. Use strategies like mapping or outlining.

Write
As you write:
• Maintain a clear and consistent position or claim.
• Include specific details; use examples and reasons to support your ideas.
• Use a variety of well-constructed, complete sentences.
• Use a logical organization with an obvious introduction, body, and conclusion.

Proofread
After you write:
☐ Did you support your ideas with specific details?
☐ Do the point of view and tone of the essay remain consistent?
☐ Check for capitalization, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and usage errors.
In America, each person is granted certain unalienable rights granted to them by the Constitution of the United States, including the individual's right to "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness." These rights, however, are sometimes taken away by the same government that granted them. This is the case with the law in many states enforcing motorcycle riders to wear a helmet. This law directly conflicts with the riders' rights granted directly to them by the Constitution.

Even though the absence of a helmet will most likely increase the danger to the rider, no one should be the one who determines whether or not a helmet is worn. The decision to wear a helmet should be purely decided by the rider, not by the government. Helmet safety should be strongly advocated by both the state and national governments, but no laws should be made enforcing their use.

One may say that riders should be forced to wear helmets on state roads because those roads are paid for and are built by the state. This argument, however, fails to realize that the money used to build roads came directly from the taxpayers' pockets. Every person on the road, including motorcycle riders, is forced to pay taxes to the government for construction and maintenance of state roads. This is yet another reason why there should not be a law enforcing the use of helmets. Since the rider has directly helped pay for the roads, he/she should be granted the option to wear a helmet, not forced.

As our founding fathers strongly believed, government should be limited in its power. This is a clear example showcasing the existence of governmental power directly inhibiting some of the basic rights of the people. Wearing a helmet will only effect that rider no one else why then should the government have the right to decide what is right for you? Your safety?

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.
Composition Score 4

The writer firmly presents a position [“This law directly conflicts with the riders' rights granted directly to them by the Constitution”]. The writer then thoroughly refutes the two chief arguments that oppose his/her position: safety and the state's authority to regulate state roads. Then the writer presents his/her main argument, citing “our founding fathers” as the source. The writer emphasizes resolve in the conclusion, [“any existing laws enforcing riders to wear helmets should be abolished”] and extends the argument to a larger issue [“and our country should again focus on the rights retained by the individual,”]. Substantial and relevant content supports the writer's position consistently throughout the essay, and every point leads directly back to the main position.

The writer’s use of strong language sways the reader. “Showcasing,” “inhibiting,” “enforcing,” “granted the option,” and “determines his/her own fate” are all good examples of words and phrases that have compelling connotations. Phrases that address the reader [“what is right for you”] also contribute to the persuasive tone.

This essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of composition skills in the persuasive mode.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.
Many motorcycle and bicycle riders are forced to wear helmets due to the laws in certain areas. Some of these riders complain that these laws conflict with their right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” because of the fact that they do not have a choice to wear what they want. In my opinion, the riders that are complaining should realize that the government is protecting them more than taking their right away.

If people do not wear helmets when they are riding their bike or motorcycle, their chance of head injury and death increases greatly. These people could fall just because there is a stone or because of a crack in the sidewalk. There are worse injuries if the biker gets hit by a car. Either incident could cause a biker’s head to split open, causing them to die. When I was younger, my mother explained to me that a man had gotten seriously injured when his bike flipped due to a small stone on the road. In my young and unintelligent brain, I could not comprehend that his head could crack open. I wore my helmet from then on because I knew it was an important part for protecting my brain.

Laws are normally followed because there are consequences if they are not followed. People may argue that laws against helmets are not productive because if the bikers do not want to follow them, they simply will not. I believe differently because it reminds the people that it is not their choice to protect themselves but that the government is making sure they do. These laws are an extra...
motive for bikers to wear helmets and to help
protect the lives of Americans.

A similar law to that of the helmet law is
the seatbelt law. This law states that each
passenger and driver has to wear a seatbelt
when the car is in motion. Just like the helmet
law, it has saved many lives and protects the
American people. This shows that the government
has many laws that help the American people
and not just the helmet law that supposedly intrudes
with our right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of
happiness”.

In conclusion, the helmet law is used to protect
the American people instead of taking away their
rights. The bikers still have the choice if they want
to follow the law or not but they should keep in
mind the consequences that will follow. I believe that
certain rights can be taken away as long as it is
for the good of the American people.

Composition Score 3

This essay makes the credible argument that helmet laws are good protection for
riders. This argument is substantiated through a personalized rationale [“When I was
younger, my mother explained to me”], a refutation of a common argument [“People
may argue that laws against helmets are not productive”], and relating the issue to
a similar one [“A similar law . . . is the seatbelt law”]. These supporting paragraphs
illustrate the writer’s general awareness of task and audience. Additionally, the student
successfully uses the rhetorical strategy of addressing the opposing view. There is no
organizational plan evident; however, the reader is moved logically through the essay,
and transitions such as “in conclusion” are present.

This essay exemplifies adequate control of compositional skills in the persuasive mode.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.
I think the law should be you have to use helmets while your riding your motorcycle and your bicycle too, because you'll feel a lot safer if you use your helmet. If you get into an accident or crash you'll have something protecting your head.

My Name's friend had gotten into an accident on her motorcycle and now she's lost some of her brain cells and she can't remember some of her childhood or any of her family or friends. Most people think it's cool to drive without a helmet but when that person crashes, they think again to wear a helmet only if that person has anything left of them to think twice.

Plus when you're driving a heavy metal machinery you have nothing surrounding you except the air and your body weight holding up that motorcycle. The motorcycles these days are very heavy and hard to control when you crash into something really because when you crash you want be crashing into anything soft you'll be crashing into something really hard.

If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.
Composition Score 2

This essay argues that there should be a law that “you have to use helmets.” The introductory paragraph is followed by a list of reasons that support the writer’s position. There is only one minor transition [“Plus when your driving”]. There is neither a concluding paragraph nor a concluding sentence. The sentences in the second and third paragraphs could be reordered, indicating that the content is not purposefully placed or elaborated on. The examples about the mom’s friend and the heavy machinery provide support but are not explicitly related back to the main argument that a helmet would protect your head. The writer does not use persuasive strategies to appeal to the reader.

This essay exemplifies limited control of composition skills in the persuasive mode.
I think that it is right to have motorcycle and bicycle riders wear their helmets. They could get injured very badly if they don’t, or even killed. It may not be what you choose to do, but I would definitely wear a helmet. That is why helmets are good and why they should be worn while on either of these vehicles.

Composition Score 1

Although the writer presents a position on the issue [“I think that it is right”], there is barely any elaboration to support the position. The writer does state a reason for this opinion [“They could get injured very badly if they don’t, or even killed”] and then a qualification [“It may not be what you choose to do”]. The few sentences are unconvincing.

This essay exemplifies little or no control of composition skills in the persuasive mode.
PSSA CONVENTIONS SCORING GUIDELINE

4  Thorough control of sentence formation.
   Few errors, if any, are present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, but the errors that are present do not interfere with meaning.

3  Adequate control of sentence formation.
   Some errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, but few, if any, of the errors that are present may interfere with meaning.

2  Limited and/or inconsistent control of sentence formation. Some sentences may be awkward or fragmented.
   Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, and some of those errors may interfere with meaning.

1  Minimal control of sentence formation. Many sentences are awkward and fragmented.
   Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, and many of those errors may interfere with meaning.
The quote, "great actions speak to all humankind," expresses that good deeds go a long way. When a person does something nice for another, it will be noticed and remembered. The examples a person sets for others are crucial to human society today. If a person notices a good action towards another person being done, they might commit to a great action as well.

One way that actions speak to humankind is through school students helping one another. If a student needs help in a school subject, a student that understands the topic should help the student. This action will be noticed by teachers as well as classmates. Because of helping the troubled student just once, the classmates might help someone when they are in the same situation. Also, the helpful student may receive an award or recognition from his or her teacher for the good deed.

Another example of actions being noticed to all humankind is the support of flood victims in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Many citizens were dedicated to raising money for the people who were affected by the flooding months ago. The reason why money, food, and other items were donated to the victims is because people noticed others being supportive and decided to help also. All because of a few citizens’ actions, the entire city joined in raising money. The flood victims are most likely very grateful.
to the people of Pittsburgh who have showed support. I am certain that in the future, other surrounding cities will remember what Pittsburgh citizens have done for the people in need and will help their own city in similar situations.

A third method of great actions speaking to humankind is helping the elderly and disabled. Many times, I have seen my parents hold doors for people in wheelchairs, or I noticed my friends volunteering at hospitals and senior citizen homes. Experiencing these situations around me have led me to volunteering to help those around me. It is obvious the people of which my friends, my family, or I help, appreciate our actions. If my parents’ and friends’ actions have influenced me, they have more than likely influenced others into going out of their way to help other people as well.

In conclusion, the quote, “great actions speak to all humankind,” is valid because peoples’ actions rub off on other people. The good deeds people accomplish are noticed by many other people. A helpful person may receive great recognition for his or her actions in the future. The examples set by people affect others all around the world.
Conventions Score 4

The writer demonstrates strong sentence formation skills using a variety of complex sentence formations, including embedding [“The quote, ‘great actions speak to all humankind,’ expresses that good deeds go a long way”] and extension [“Many citizens were dedicated to raising money for the people who were affected by the flooding months ago”]. Punctuation and capitalization are also correct. There is one spelling error, “recieve.” There are a few usage errors [“have showed” for “have shown”], wrong prepositions [“to” for “by”], and a few agreement errors [“Experiencing these situations around me have led me to volunteering”], but these errors do not obstruct the reading or interfere with meaning.

This essay exemplifies strong and consistent control of all elements of conventions.
The Helmet

Laws are everywhere when it comes to wearing a helmet. A vacationing spot I went to every weekend even had a law like this. The law stated, “you must wear a helmet while riding a bike if you are 14 years of age or younger.” Many may think this law is infringing upon their God given rights; life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I on the other hand think this is a great law.

This law is very effective and saves many of lives. The helmet protects the most vulnerable and important part of the body, the head. If someone was riding on the street and just happened to fall off and crack their head open, I think they would learn a lesson to wear a helmet. Even if someone has never been in an accident does not mean they never will be. It is a risk everyone takes when they are out driving.

My experiences with this law have saved my life. When I was learning to ride a bike without training wheels, I must have fell hundreds of times. A few of these occasions was likely on my skull. My whole life I had to wear a helmet on my bike. I still do I like to because I still fall.

Wearing a helmet practices good heaful behaviors. Just like in a car, there are laws to wear a seat belt. In health class we learned an action that can harm you is an unnecessary end a risk decision.
I think this is a good law that saves people the law ensures your head is protected at all times. It also lets you practice safety and good health. Just like wearing a seat belt, if people want to be smart, wear a helmet.

Conventions Score 3

The writer demonstrates adequate control of sentence formation. Complex sentence structures are rarely attempted (most sentences are simple sentences); therefore, a thorough control of sentence formation is not demonstrated. Outside of an error in word choice [“healful” instead of “healthful”], the student demonstrates sufficient control of spelling. There are few errors in grammar and usage [“I must have fell” instead of “fallen”], and these do not interfere with the meaning of the essay.

This essay exemplifies adequate control of all elements of conventions.
If you need additional space, please continue on the next page.
Because actions every body can see and great thoughts not everyone would think that.
People can imagine. Not everyone can see things. But most people can imagine things.

Conventions Score 1

The writer demonstrates minimal skills in conventions. The word order in the first sentence is jumbled, causing confusion for the reader [“Because actions everybody can see and great thoughts not everyone would think that”]. The second sentence has a usage error and should read “People can imagine thoughts,” instead of “Thoughts is what people can imagine.” The last two sentences should be combined. Capital letters are used randomly.

This essay exemplifies little or no control of all elements of conventions.