Sample Writing Item: Our Town

Using this document: Review this sample item to gain a better understanding of the look, feel, and process of the ACCESS for ELLs Writing test. Use this item in any way that is helpful for you and your students: for example, you might assign this item as homework, as journaling practice, or as a group activity. If practical for your classroom, WIDA strongly encourages you to use the sample test administrator script to do a full mock administration of this sample item, as a realistic administration can help prepare your students for the real test.

If you do plan a mock administration, read through this document and set aside 45 minutes to explain the activity and allow students to write their responses. Create materials for the mock administration by printing:

- One copy of pages 2-4 for each student.
  You can print pages 3 and 4 as a double-sided single sheet.
- One copy of pages 6 and 7 for yourself.
  You can print this as a double-sided single sheet.

Explain to your students what they will do, and then read the script provided to administer the sample item.
Our Town

These students used milk cartons to build a model of their town. The pictures show how they collected all the milk cartons and made their model.
Now it's your turn to write!

Write a report about how the class built a model of their town. In your report, explain each step the students took. Write about how each step helped the students reach their goal.
Now check your writing. Ask yourself:

- Did I write a beginning and an ending for my report?
- Did I explain how the students used their resources?
- Did I explain how the students worked together?
How to Read the Script

The script includes text that is read aloud during test administration as well as directions for the test administrator.

- Read aloud all bold text. Instructions students hear are black and bold. Test items are blue and bold.
- Do NOT read unbolded text aloud. Unbolded text gives direction to the test administrator.

Introducing the Sample Item

Explain to your students that they're about to complete a writing exercise. This exercise is similar to a test they will take in the future. The test will be their opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills in English, and this practice exercise will help them get ready for the test.

When the students are ready and understand what they're going to do, pass out the test materials. Each student needs a complete copy of the sample test item.

Read the script below to guide students through the writing task.
Look at the page with the pictures. At the top of this page, it says, “Our Town.”
Scan the room and make sure all students are in the right place.

Look at the sentences at the top of the page. They say,

“These students used milk cartons to build a model of their town. The pictures show how they collected all the milk cartons and made their model.”

Now look at Pictures A and B. PAUSE.

Pictures A and B show how the students collected milk cartons. In Picture A, the students label boxes so everyone knows where to put their milk cartons. In Picture B, the students hang up a sign to tell everyone that they are collecting milk cartons.

Now look at Picture C. PAUSE.

Picture C shows resources that the students used to create their model. Find the map in Picture C. PAUSE.

The students used a map to plan their model. How do you think the map helped them plan their model?
Allow time for students to respond. If necessary, say: The map helped them know where to put the milk cartons.

They used their plan to build their model. They also used the other materials in Picture C.

Now look at Picture D. PAUSE.

Picture D shows the finished model of the town. The students displayed it in the school hallway so everyone could see it.

Do you have any questions?
Answer questions.

Look at the top of the next page. It says, “Now it’s your turn to write!”
Scan the room and make sure all students are in the right place.

Look at the directions. They say,

“Write a report about how the class built a model of their town. In your report, explain each step the students took. Write about how each step helped the students reach their goal.”

Now turn the page over.
If you did not print this page double-sided, say: Now look at the next page.
Look at the questions at the bottom of the page. Follow along while I read this part aloud.

It says,

“Now check your writing. Ask yourself:
Did I write a beginning and an ending for my report?
Did I explain how the students used their resources?
Did I explain how the students worked together?”

These questions are important. When you finish writing, use them to check your work. Answer each question in your head. If the answer is “No,” go back and try to make your writing better.

Now turn back to the first page with lines on it.
Scan the room and make sure all students are in the right place.

You will have 30 minutes to write. Start writing on the first line.

If you get to the bottom of the page and need more lines to write on, you may turn the page over and write on the back.
If you did not print this page double-sided, say: If you get to the bottom of the page and need more lines to write on, you may write on the next page with lines on it.

Remember: You will write a report about how the class built a model of their town. You will explain each step the students took and how it helped them reach their goal.

Do you have any questions?
Answer questions.

Now begin writing.
Monitor the students. Check to make sure everyone is following directions. When the students have finished, remind them to check their work.
After 25 minutes have passed, say: You have about 5 more minutes to write.
At the end of 30 minutes, say: Please finish what you are writing now. PAUSE.
End the testing session by saying:

Please put down your pencils, and I will come around to collect your writing.