Grade 4 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about weather and weather patterns in the United States. You are given three sources about thunderstorms.

Read the sources carefully to write an opinion essay in which you give your opinion about which place you would rather live, Florida or Colorado. Make sure you clearly state your opinion and write several paragraphs supporting your opinion with reasons and details from the sources.

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 5

The opinion is clear and supported by several reasons. The writing demonstrates understanding of Florida's weather and includes on-topic elaboration. Details are relevant but general and sometimes inaccurate or unsupported by sources.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ The opinion is stated immediately: *"I'm talking about Florida the sunshine state."* ○ The writer's purpose—to explain why they prefer Florida—is easy to understand, meeting "writer's purpose and main ideas are easy to understand."	➢ **Clarify Cause and Effect:** ○ Explain *why* each reason matters ("Warm weather means more time for outdoor fun").
✓ **Relevant Details** ○ Gives reasons that align with the topic: *"I like the warm weather," "I can tell what the weather will be,"* and *"the rain can help us."* ○ These reasons connect to source ideas about Florida's heat and rainfall, aligning with "specific details support main ideas."	➢ **Add Source-Based Evidence:** ○ Include details from the readings, such as "Florida has more than 80 days of thunderstorms each year," to strengthen factual support.
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ Each paragraph offers multiple related points, showing growth beyond listing. ○ However, reasoning often remains general ("rain helps us") rather than supported with specific evidence from the sources (like humidity or rainfall data).	➢ **Add a Stronger Fact Connection:** ○ Mention Florida's nickname, "the Thunderstorm Capital," to show understanding of the source material.
✓ **Accuracy and Focus** ○ Some statements show misunderstanding of the sources (e.g., "the weather won't change every hour like in Colorado" is correct but oversimplified; "rain makes the air less humid" is inaccurate). ○ The opinion and details remain on-topic throughout, meeting "details are on-topic."	➢ **Correct Small Misunderstandings:** ○ Revise sentences like "rain makes the air less humid" to match what the text says (rain happens because the air is humid).

Organization: 5

The essay follows a logical structure with a clear introduction, body paragraphs organized by reason, and a conclusion that summarizes the opinion. Transitions are functional but repetitive.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Introduction** ○ Opens with a hook ("Imagine the perfect warm, sunny day") and introduces the opinion early. ○ Meets the rubric's "introduction identifies the topic and makes the reader want to keep reading."	➢
✓ **Grouping and Order** ○ Body paragraphs are organized by reason: warm weather, predictable weather, and helpful rain. ○ The information is grouped logically and makes sense to the reader.	➢ **Add Linking Sentences:** ○ Insert short connections between paragraphs to create smoother flow ("Warm weather also helps make the rain that helps Florida's plants grow.").
✓ **Transitions and Sequencing** ○ Uses simple connectors ("One of the reasons," "I would also want to live…") that guide readers clearly, though with some repetition.	➢ **Vary Transition Words:** ○ Replace repetitive transitions ("I would also want to") with new ones ("In addition," "Another reason").
✓ **Conclusion and Closure** ○ The essay ends with a restatement and direct address to the audience ("I hope to see you in Florida someday!!"). ○ Meets "concluding statement or section is about the opinion presented."	➢ **Tighten the Conclusion:** ○ Combine enthusiasm with summary ("Florida's warm, sunny weather and helpful rain make it a wonderful place to live.").

Voice: 4

The voice is friendly, confident, and inviting. The writer's enthusiasm for Florida is clear, though the tone is more conversational than persuasive.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaging and Honest Tone** ○ Conversational phrasing ("Can you guess what I'm talking about?" "Wouldn't you hate it if…") invites the reader in.	➢
✓ **Sincerity and Energy** ○ Positive, cheerful tone throughout ("I hope to see you in Florida someday!!") matches the writer's preference.	➢ **Reduce Overuse of Exclamation Marks:** ○ Use one or two for emphasis, then rely on strong words to convey excitement.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Directly addresses readers ("Don't you just love warm weather?"), maintaining engagement.	➢ **Add One Reflective Sentence:** ○ Include a short line about how living in Florida would make you feel ("I would feel happy waking up to sunshine every day.").
✓ **Formality and Focus** ○ Tone remains consistent but sometimes too casual for academic opinion writing.	➢ **Balance Friendly and Persuasive Tone:** ○ Replace conversational questions with confident statements ("Warm weather makes Florida a great place to live.").

Word Choice: 3

The language is clear and appropriate for grade level, but vocabulary is simple and repetitive. Few precise or content-based words from the sources appear.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Precision and Variety** ○ Repetition of "warm weather," "Florida," and "rain" limits vocabulary variety.	➢ **Replace Repeated Words:** ○ Substitute synonyms ("heat," "sunshine," "climate") for "warm weather."
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ Uses general weather terms but lacks topic-specific words like "humidity," "climate," or "thunderstorms."	➢ **Add Content Vocabulary:** ○ Use weather words from the sources ("humid air," "rainfall," "lightning").
✓ **Descriptive Detail** ○ Some imagery appears ("Imagine the perfect warm, sunny day"), but it's not maintained through the essay.	➢ **Enhance Descriptions:** ○ Include sensory details ("The warm air feels soft, and the sun shines bright on the beach.").
✓ **Purpose and Audience Fit** ○ Vocabulary is understandable but basic, meeting "words get the message across."	➢

Sentence Fluency: 4

The writing flows naturally with complete sentences and readable rhythm. Sentence beginnings and lengths show some variety, though transitions remain basic.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Smooth Flow** ○ Sentences read easily aloud; punctuation supports natural pauses.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences:** ○ Merge related ideas to create longer, smoother sentences.
✓ **Variety of Sentence Patterns** ○ Includes both short and compound sentences ("Also I can go outside and play with my friends. Also Warm weather helps make rain.").	➢ **Add Complex Sentences:** ○ Include sentences with "because," "although," or "while" to increase variety.
✓ **Repetition in Structure** ○ Multiple sentences begin with "Also" or "I," creating a predictable rhythm.	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings:** ○ Start some sentences with transition words other than "Also" ("Because," "When," "In Florida," "Since").
✓ **Readable and Natural Sound** ○ The piece meets "the writing is easy to read out loud."	➢

Conventions: 4

Basic punctuation and capitalization are correct, but errors with capitalization, commas, and possessives are noticeable. Minor grammar issues appear.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Capitalization and Punctuation** ○ Missing commas after introductory words ("Imagine the perfect warm, sunny day"). ○ Inconsistent capitalization ("Also Warm weather").	➢ **Review Capitalization:** ○ Capitalize sentence beginnings and important nouns correctly.
✓ **Spelling** ○ Misspellings include "geuss," "woln't," and "florida."	➢ **Fix Spelling Errors:** ○ Check all proper nouns (Florida, Colorado) and high-frequency words ("guess," "won't").
✓ **Grammar and Sentence Control** ○ Sentences are complete but occasionally repetitive or loosely joined.	➢ **Add Commas for Clarity:** ○ Use commas after introductory phrases and before conjunctions in compound sentences.

Use of Sources: 3

The essay reflects basic understanding of Florida's climate but provides no direct reference to source material. Information is paraphrased or inferred rather than explicitly cited.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Understanding of Topic** ○ Mentions Florida's "warm weather" and "rain," aligning with *Source #3's* description of hot, humid conditions.	➢
✓ **Limited Integration** ○ No direct citations or factual data (e.g., thunderstorm frequency or rainfall amounts).	➢ **Add Source-Based Facts:** ○ Include one statistic ("Florida has more than 80 thunderstorm days a year").
✓ **Paraphrasing** ○ General references to predictable weather and rain show awareness but lack precision.	➢ **Use Clear Source References:** ○ Introduce facts with "According to the article about Florida…"
✓ **Source Variety** ○ Only Florida information is used; Colorado is mentioned only once as a contrast.	➢ **Include Comparison Evidence:** ○ Add one fact about Colorado ("Colorado has 300 days of sunshine but sudden weather changes").

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Ideas and Content:

Fact vs. Opinion Sort:

- Students identify which statements from the essay are factual (from sources) and which are personal opinions.

"Why Does It Matter?" Expansion Routine:

- After each reason, have students write one sentence explaining why that reason supports their opinion.

Weather Fact Integration Mini-Lesson:

- Model how to insert specific source facts naturally into a paragraph to strengthen credibility.

Organization:

Transition Variety Chart:

- Create a list of alternative transitions by purpose (adding, comparing, concluding).

Paragraph Mapping Routine:

- Students label each paragraph by reason and verify logical order.

Strong Conclusion Workshop:

- Model how to write one-sentence closings that restate opinion and summarize reasons confidently.

Voice:

Tone Ladder Activity:

- Students practice rewriting sentences in formal, persuasive, and conversational tones to compare effects.

"Reader Impact" Reflection:

- Have students describe what they want the reader to think or feel after reading their essay.

Peer Tone Review:

- Partners identify parts that sound too casual and suggest revisions for a more persuasive tone.

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Word Choice:

Weather Word Wall:

- Display topic-specific words (humidity, lightning, thunderstorm, climate) and encourage students to use them.

Synonym Practice:

- Students highlight repeated words in their draft and replace half with new vocabulary.

Imagery Sentence Challenge:

- Have students expand one simple sentence using sight, sound, and feeling words.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Chart:

- Show sentence starters by type (prepositional, dependent clause, adverb) and have students practice rewriting.

Sentence Combining Mini-Lesson:

- Model combining short sentences using conjunctions to create flow.

Read-Aloud Rhythm Check:

- Students read aloud in pairs, noting where writing sounds choppy or repetitive.

Conventions:

Conventions Editing Checklist:

- Students check for capitals, commas, and correct spelling before submission.

Peer Proofreading Round:

- Partners review each other's drafts, focusing on punctuation and capitalization.

Spelling Review Routine:

- Have students identify three tricky words and create personal spelling cards to practice.

Use of Sources:

Source Note-Taking Organizer:

- Have students record one fact per source before drafting to ensure balanced evidence.

Paraphrase Practice:

- Provide short factual sentences for students to rephrase in their own words.

Citation Frame Practice:

- Teach how to embed source phrases naturally ("In Source #1, it says that…").