Grade 4 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 3

The opinion is clear and reasons are relevant, but factual details and development are limited. The essay includes one source reference and several personal opinions, but elaboration and explanation are minimal.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ States opinion directly: *"I think I would rather live in Florida."* ○ Maintains focus on Florida throughout, fulfilling the rubric's "writer's purpose and main ideas are easy to understand."	➢ **Include a Contrast:** ○ Add one sentence about Colorado's unpredictable weather to strengthen comparison.
✓ **Relevant but Limited Details** ○ Mentions reasons connected to the topic—warm rain, humidity, smaller winter crowds, and theme parks—but only one brief source citation (*"Source #2 is where I found this information"*). ○ Facts are not fully developed or connected to weather explanations.	➢ **Add Facts from the Sources:** ○ Include data about Florida's thunderstorms or sunshine from the readings ("Florida has more than 80 thunderstorm days each year").
✓ **Elaboration and Development** ○ Descriptive details are simple and personal ("rain water is warm," "I like the Summer air"), but ideas stop short of explaining why these matter. ○ Lacks supporting examples or factual elaboration from readings.	➢ **Explain Why Details Matter:** ○ After each reason, add a sentence connecting it to your opinion ("Warm rain makes Florida fun to explore even in storms.").
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ Stays on topic but includes tangential details ("I wouldn't live in Orlando because it's too crowded") that do not support the weather-based opinion.	➢ **Remove Off-Topic Information:** ○ Delete details about Orlando's crowds or Universal Studios unless tied to the weather topic.

Organization: 3

The essay has an introduction and body but lacks clear paragraph breaks and transitions. The sequence is mostly logical but loosely connected.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Introduction** ○ Begins by identifying both choices (Florida and Colorado) and stating a preference for Florida. ○ Meets "introduction identifies the topic" but lacks a clear preview of reasons.	➢
✓ **Grouping and Order** ○ Ideas follow a general order (why Florida, drawbacks, and what's enjoyable), but lack strong internal structure.	➢ **Organize by Reason:** ○ Dedicate one paragraph to each main reason (warm rain, humid air, fewer people in winter).
✓ **Transitions and Flow** ○ Few transitions; ideas connect with "but" and "and" rather than clear linking phrases.	➢ **Add Clear Transitions:** ○ Use connecting words ("Another reason," "Also," "Finally") between ideas.
✓ **Conclusion and Closure** ○ Ends abruptly without restating the opinion or summarizing reasons.	➢ **Add a Conclusion:** ○ End with one strong closing sentence summarizing why Florida is the best choice.

Voice: 4

The tone is genuine, friendly, and personal. The student's connection to Florida gives the writing sincerity, though phrasing can be repetitive and informal.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaging and Sincere Tone** ○ Expresses personal connection and enjoyment of Florida ("I like the warm rain water," "I like the Summer air").	➢ **Balance Personal and Factual Statements:** ○ Pair personal experiences with factual reasons to sound informed and credible.
✓ **Authenticity** ○ Feels conversational and heartfelt, matching "writing is lively, sincere, or honest."	➢ **Add Persuasive Energy:** ○ Use stronger phrases ("Florida is perfect for people who love sunshine.").
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Addresses the reader naturally but without persuasive energy.	➢ **End with Confidence:** ○ Conclude with a persuasive statement ("That's why Florida is the best place to live!").
✓ **Consistency of Tone** ○ Maintains an honest, friendly tone throughout.	➢

Word Choice: 3

The vocabulary is simple and repetitive, with occasional descriptive phrasing. Limited topic vocabulary from the sources appears.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Precision and Variety** ○ Frequent repetition of "Florida," "rain," and "summer."	➢ **Replace Repetition:** ○ Substitute "Florida" with pronouns or phrases like "this state" or "the Sunshine State."

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ Includes "humid," "thunderstorms," and "rainstorms" but without elaboration or variety.	➢ **Add Weather Vocabulary:** ○ Use words like "humidity," "lightning," "storms," or "temperature" to show topic understanding.
✓ **Descriptive Language** ○ Occasional imagery ("warm rain water") adds interest but is not expanded.	➢ **Enhance Descriptive Detail:** ○ Add sensory details ("The warm rain feels soft and refreshing on your skin.").
✓ **Appropriate for Audience** ○ Words are understandable but basic for grade level.	➢

Sentence Fluency: 3

The writing is readable but repetitive, with limited variation in sentence structure. Run-ons and missing punctuation reduce smoothness.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Flow and Rhythm** ○ Sentences read naturally but often connect with "and" or "but."	➢
✓ **Sentence Variety** ○ Most sentences begin similarly ("I think," "I would," "I also").	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings:** ○ Start sentences with new words or phrases ("Because," "In Florida," "Even when").
✓ **Punctuation and Control** ○ Several run-ons reduce fluency ("But one thing I do like about Florida is that you can walk in the rain even if it's time…").	➢ **Break Long Sentences:** ○ Divide run-ons into shorter sentences for clarity.
✓ **Readability** ○ The rhythm is steady but lacks varied sentence lengths.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences:** ○ Join related ideas with commas or conjunctions for smoother flow.

Conventions: 2

Frequent capitalization, punctuation, and spacing errors interfere with readability. Some sentences begin with lowercase letters or run together.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Capitalization** ○ Missing capitals at sentence beginnings ("but I would especially want to go…").	➢ **Check Sentence Beginnings:** ○ Make sure each sentence starts with a capital letter.
✓ **Punctuation** ○ Missing commas and periods cause long, confusing sentences.	➢ **Add Missing Punctuation:** ○ Use periods to end sentences and commas before conjunctions ("and," "but").
✓ **Grammar and Spelling** ○ Words like "its" for "it's" and inconsistent use of "their/there" reduce accuracy.	➢ **Review Grammar and Spelling:** ○ Correct "its" → "it's" and check all homophones for proper use.

Use of Sources: 3

The student references one source by number but includes little factual evidence. Most reasoning is personal or inferred rather than drawn directly from the readings.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate but Minimal Source Use** ○ Mentions *"Source #2 is where I found this information,"* showing some awareness of source use.	➢
✓ **Limited Integration** ○ No specific data or paraphrased details appear; the mention of "too many kinds of weather" echoes Source #2 generally.	➢ **Explain Source Connection:** ○ After mentioning a source, include the specific information you learned from it.
✓ **Balance of Sources** ○ Only one source referenced; no evidence from Florida sources.	➢ **Add Factual Details from Both Sources:** ○ Use one Florida fact ("80 thunderstorm days per year") and one Colorado fact ("weather can change quickly").
✓ **Citation and Attribution** ○ Citation format correct but unsupported with content.	➢ **Use Consistent Citation Phrases:** ○ Write "According to Source #2" at the start of a factual sentence.

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–Opinion Connection Chart:

- Have students list each opinion and link it to a supporting fact from the source.

"Why It Matters" Sentence Frame:

- Provide frames like *"This shows that…"* or *"That's why…"* to help elaborate reasoning.

Stay-on-Topic Highlighting:

- Students underline sentences that support their opinion and cross out unrelated ones.

Organization:

Paragraph Planning Organizer:

- Students outline one reason per paragraph before drafting.

Transition Word Chart:

- Display common transitions grouped by function (addition, contrast, conclusion).

Conclusion Practice:

- Have students write one-sentence summaries for multiple short paragraphs to strengthen closure.

Voice:

"Voice Audit" Partner Feedback:

- Peers highlight lines that sound authentic and suggest one place to add persuasive tone.

Emotion + Evidence Pairing:

- Teach students to follow each emotional sentence with a factual one.

Hook and Close Workshop:

- Model how to open and end essays with confidence and energy.

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.

Word Choice:

Topic Vocabulary List:

- Have students collect five weather words from the sources and use them in revisions.

Synonym Brainstorm:

- Students find three replacements for repeated words.

Sensory Description Mini-Lesson:

- Practice expanding one basic sentence using sight, sound, and feeling details.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Combining Practice:

- Model how to merge related ideas using conjunctions.

Sentence Starter Chart:

- Provide examples of new sentence beginnings to increase variety.

Oral Read-Aloud:

- Students read aloud to find where natural pauses indicate needed punctuation.

Conventions:

Sentence Boundary Mini-Lesson:

- Use examples from the essay to identify where one sentence ends and another begins.

Editing Pass Routine:

- Have students check capitals and punctuation first before spelling.

Peer Editing Station:

- Students exchange papers to find and mark three missing punctuation or capitalization errors.

Use of Sources:

Two-Source Organizer:

- Have students record one fact from each source before drafting.

Source Sentence Starter Practice:

- Teach how to embed citations smoothly using sentence frames.

Fact Verification Activity:

- Students highlight facts in their essay and match them to where they appear in the readings.