Grade 5 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Approaching

Task: Your class is studying about the history of animals and how they have contributed to human growth and development. You are given three articles about service animals.

Read the sources carefully to write an opinion essay in which you give your opinion about whether you agree with a new rule allowing only service dogs and miniature horses in public places, or whether you disagree with the rule. 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: 4

The essay presents a clear, balanced opinion supported by relevant reasoning. It shows understanding of the debate and references source-aligned ideas (disease, damage, fairness), though evidence is mostly paraphrased and not cited.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ States position clearly: *"I personally think it is good but at the same time bad."* ○ Concludes decisively: *"The law should change to permit service dogs and monkeys."*	➢ **Clarify Main Opinion Earlier:** ○ State clearly in the introduction that you want *dogs and monkeys* allowed rather than waiting until the conclusion.
✓ **Relevant and Accurate Details** ○ References key facts from the sources: *"Big service animals can wreck things that are flimsy and fragile and make too much noise."* ○ Demonstrates awareness of disease concerns and access issues, consistent with *Source #3 ("New Service Animal Rules")* and *Source #1 ("Monkey Helpers")*.	➢ **Explain Reasoning More Fully:** ○ After mentioning fairness, elaborate on why the law should change ("This would give more independence to people who rely on animals other than dogs.").
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ Includes reasoning for both sides, showing fairness ("The good is that… The bad side is…"). ○ However, elaboration is minimal — few details explain *why* monkeys should be exceptions beyond being "under control."	➢ **Add Text Evidence:** ○ Include one fact from the sources about monkeys' training or safety checks ("According to the article, monkey helpers are trained for years before helping people.").
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ Focus remains on the law, but several examples (like the snake scenario) are hypothetical rather than text-based.	➢ **Limit Hypotheticals:** ○ Replace "snake" examples with factual details about monkeys from the sources.

Organization: 3

The essay shows logical intent with a "pros vs. cons" format but lacks paragraph transitions, topic sentences, and balanced development.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Introduction** ○ Begins conversationally: *"Do you like the new law that only permits service dogs…?"* but delays clarity of stance.	➢
✓ **Grouping and Order** ○ Uses a simple "good vs. bad" structure that gives balance but little transition between ideas.	➢ **Separate Body Paragraphs:** ○ Place "good" and "bad" sections into distinct paragraphs with topic sentences.
✓ **Transitions and Flow** ○ Limited connecting language ("Then there is the bad side") without smooth linkage.	➢ **Add Transitions:** ○ Use connecting words ("On the other hand," "For example," "In addition") for smoother flow.
✓ **Conclusion and Closure** ○ Ends with a clear statement proposing change ("permit service dogs and monkeys") but no summary of reasons.	➢ **Strengthen the Conclusion:** ○ Restate your two main points and summarize why this change matters.

Voice: 4

The tone is sincere, conversational, and fair-minded. The writer demonstrates awareness of multiple perspectives and connects with the reader through inclusive language.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaging and Honest Tone** ○ The student writes directly to readers ("Do you like the new law…?") and shows empathy for people with disabilities ("It would not be fair to them because it is like they have no rights").	➢ **Reduce Questions:** ○ Replace rhetorical questions with strong statements for conviction.
✓ **Sincerity and Balance** ○ Treats both sides thoughtfully before stating a personal opinion.	➢ **Add Personal Connection:** ○ Briefly note why fairness or inclusion matters to you ("Everyone deserves to live freely, no matter what animal helps them.").
✓ **Consistency of Tone** ○ Maintains a neutral, reasonable tone throughout, even when disagreeing.	➢ **Add Persuasive Confidence:** ○ Use more assertive phrasing ("The law should allow monkeys too because they are well-trained and safe.").
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Appeals to fairness, helping readers see both perspectives.	➢

Word Choice: 3

Word choice is clear and appropriate but simple. Repetition and vague phrasing limit precision and sophistication.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Precision and Variety** ○ Repeats common terms ("good," "bad," "law," "service animals").	➢ **Expand Descriptions:** ○ Add precise detail ("Monkeys are intelligent, small, and careful when trained").

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ Includes topic-related words ("disabled person," "disease") but lacks variety or elaboration.	➢ **Include Source Vocabulary:** ○ Use words from the readings such as "regulation," "training," "assistance animals."
✓ **Descriptive Language** ○ Few vivid details; relies on conversational terms like "big animals," "bad side."	➢ **Add Specific Language:** ○ Replace "good/bad" with specific words ("benefits/drawbacks," "advantages/challenges").
✓ **Appropriate Tone** ○ Language fits purpose but needs stronger academic vocabulary.	➢

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are readable but structurally simple, often beginning the same way. Some are choppy or run together without proper punctuation.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Flow and Rhythm** ○ Sentences read smoothly but are repetitive in pattern.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences:** ○ Merge related ideas for smoother flow.
✓ **Variety of Structures** ○ Many sentences start with "The" or "It."	➢ **Vary Sentence Starters:** ○ Begin with transition phrases ("Because," "When," "For people with disabilities").
✓ **Punctuation and Run-Ons** ○ Missing commas in compound ideas ("The good is that the the men and women who passed the law are right").	➢ **Fix Run-Ons:** ○ Add commas or periods where sentences connect too closely.
✓ **Readability** ○ Despite errors, sentences remain understandable.	➢

Conventions: 2

Frequent punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors interrupt flow. Errors distract but do not obscure meaning.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Punctuation and Capitalization** ○ Missing commas and double "the" ("the the men and women…"). ○ Inconsistent capitalization of sentence beginnings ("II n conclusion").	➢ **Fix Capitalization and Punctuation:** ○ Ensure each sentence starts with a capital and ends with a period.
✓ **Spelling Errors** ○ Misspellings ("can not" instead of "cannot," "law of not" for "law or not").	➢ **Edit for Spelling and Duplicates:** ○ Correct "the the" and "law of not."

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Grammar and Mechanics** ○ Incomplete and fragmented sentences appear ("A disabled person who does not have a service dog but does have a service monkey can not go to a restaurant or even go out to any place except for their front or back yard.").	➢ **Proofread Aloud:** ○ Reading aloud helps catch run-ons and missing punctuation.

Use of Sources: 3

The essay reflects understanding of the readings, paraphrasing key ideas about disease, size, and fairness. However, it lacks direct citation or variety across sources.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Understanding** ○ Mentions disease risks and destructive animals aligned with *Source #3*. ○ Notes that monkeys help disabled people, referencing *Source #1.*	➢ **Include One Factual Statistic:** ○ Add a source detail (years of monkey training, ADA's public health rule).
✓ **Paraphrasing** ○ Information is summarized accurately but without attribution ("big service animals can wreck things").	➢ **Add Source Citations:** ○ Use phrases like "According to Source #1, monkeys can…" to strengthen credibility.
✓ **Balance of Sources** ○ Covers both sides of the debate but favors general reasoning over direct quotes.	➢ **Balance Evidence:** ○ Include at least one detail from *Source #2* about emotional benefits of service animals.
✓ **Citation and Attribution** ○ No explicit mention of "Source #1" or "Source #3."	➢

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–Reason–Explanation" Routine:

- Students build one paragraph per reason using a sourced fact, explanation, and link to opinion.

Source Highlighting Practice:

- Have students color-code evidence directly from each text to ensure factual grounding.

Clarity Check Workshop:

- Students read introductions aloud and underline where their opinion is clearly stated.

Organization:

Opinion Outline Organizer:

- Students plan sections for "support," "counterpoint," and "final opinion."

Transition Variety Chart:

- Practice inserting transitions for contrast and cause/effect.

Paragraph Development Workshop:

- Model how to expand each reason into its own body paragraph with evidence and commentary.

Voice:

"Voice Ladder" Activity:

- Show how tone changes from uncertain to confident with examples.

Reader Response Routine:

- Students exchange drafts and describe how each writer's tone feels (friendly, strong, unsure).

Persuasive Restatement Practice:

- Teach rewriting rhetorical questions into assertive claims.

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:

Word Choice Ladder:

- Students transform general words ("bad") into precise synonyms ("unsafe," "problematic").

Vocabulary Anchor Chart:

- List topic-specific academic terms drawn from the sources.

Replace & Revise Routine:

- Have students highlight repeated words and brainstorm alternatives.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Sort:

- Students identify and rewrite repeated sentence openings.

Sentence Combining Practice:

- Model how to merge two choppy sentences into one fluent statement.

Read-Aloud Rhythm Check:

- Have students read aloud and mark where sentences sound awkward.

Conventions:

Conventions Editing Checklist:

- Focus on sentence boundaries, capitalization, and common spelling patterns.

Peer Editing Station:

- Students mark missing punctuation or duplicated words.

"Proofread with Purpose" Routine:

- Teach a step-by-step reread for capitals, commas, and periods separately.

Use of Sources:

Source Integration Frames:

- Model sentence starters ("In the article…") for embedding evidence.

Two-Source Comparison Chart:

- Students note one supporting fact from each source.

Fact-Explanation Routine:

- After adding a fact, students write one follow-up "This shows…" sentence to connect reasoning.