Grade 4 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Meets

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: 4

The essay presents a clear, consistent opinion supported by relevant facts from the sources. While information is accurate and on-topic, elaboration and explanation are limited.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ The opinion is explicit: *"I would live in Florida because of all the sunshine and rain."* ○ Maintains focus on Florida throughout, fulfilling the rubric's "writer's purpose and main ideas are easy to understand."
✓ **Relevant and Accurate Details** ○ Uses information directly connected to the sources: *"Florida is known as the Sunshine State and thunderstorm capital because of all the thunderstorms and sunshine."* ○ Includes accurate contrasts to Colorado: *"Colorado has over 300 days of sunshine… it is hard to predict the weather."*
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ The writer provides several factual statements but limited analysis or explanation. ○ Statements like *"I love thunderstorms because they are interesting to examine and study"* show enthusiasm but do not expand on how this supports living there.
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ The writing stays consistently on topic, with no irrelevant details. ○ The paragraph structure reinforces focus, though some ideas (sunshine, rain) repeat without elaboration.

Organization: 4

The essay follows a logical structure with clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Transitions are repetitive.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Introduction** ○ Begins with a clear topic sentence and sets opinion ("If I were to live in Florida or Colorado…"). ○ Meets "introduction identifies the topic."
✓ **Grouping and Order** ○ Paragraphs are arranged logically: reasons for Florida, contrast with Colorado, summary and conclusion.
✓ **Transitions and Flow** ○ Uses basic connecting phrases ("On the other hand," "In conclusion"). ○ Repetitive transitions make the flow predictable.
✓ **Conclusion and Closure** ○ The conclusion restates the opinion clearly ("I would love to live in Florida because of these reasons in my essay"). ○ Provides closure but adds no new insight.

Voice: 4

The tone is sincere and confident. The writer expresses interest in weather and thunderstorms but uses limited persuasive flair.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Sincerity and Personality** ○ Lines like *"I love thunderstorms because they are interesting to examine and study"* show genuine curiosity.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Addresses the reader clearly with polite and organized tone.
✓ **Consistency of Tone** ○ Maintains respectful, calm tone throughout; lacks the lively engagement seen in stronger papers.
✓ **Energy and Expression** ○ Voice is appropriate but restrained, making the essay sound more factual than persuasive.

Word Choice: 3

Language is clear and correct but repetitive. Limited vocabulary variety and minimal topic-specific words reduce precision.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Precision and Variety** ○ Repetition of "sunshine," "rain," and "Florida" weakens variety.
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ Includes relevant words like "humid" and "thunderstorms" but does not expand beyond basic terms.
✓ **Appropriate for Audience** ○ Language is grade-appropriate and easy to understand.
✓ **Descriptive Language** ○ Few adjectives or sensory descriptions; tone remains factual.

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are complete and readable with mostly smooth rhythm. Structure is repetitive but consistent and easy to follow.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable and Natural Flow** ○ Sentences read easily and are correctly punctuated.
✓ **Sentence Variety** ○ Several sentences begin the same way ("Florida is…," "In Colorado…").
✓ **Length and Pattern** ○ Most sentences are short or medium length, creating a steady but predictable rhythm.
✓ **Transitions Between Ideas** ○ Paragraphs are cohesive though transitions are basic.

Conventions: 4

The writing demonstrates solid control of punctuation, capitalization, and grammar. Minor spacing and comma issues appear but do not affect clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Punctuation and Capitalization** ○ Occasional missing commas after introductory phrases but correct sentence endings and capitals.
✓ **Spelling Accuracy** ○ All high-frequency words and proper nouns (Florida, Colorado) spelled correctly.
✓ **Grammar and Mechanics** ○ Sentences are complete and grammatical, with no major structural errors.

Use of Sources: 4

The essay includes accurate information from both Florida and Colorado sources, paraphrased in the student's own words, but lacks explicit citation or explanation.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Use of Information** ○ Facts such as *"Florida is the thunderstorm capital"* and *"Colorado has over 300 days of sunshine"* align with source material.
✓ **Paraphrasing and Integration** ○ Facts are rephrased naturally without copying directly.
✓ **Source Variety** ○ Uses information from both states but emphasizes Florida more.
✓ **Citation and Attribution** ○ References are embedded informally, without naming sources.

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 + Why It Matters" Sentence Frame:

- Students practice adding one explanatory sentence after each factual statement to deepen reasoning.

Compare–Contrast Organizer:

- Use a T-chart to ensure each Florida reason is paired with one Colorado contrast detail.

Source Evidence Integration Lesson:

- Model inserting statistics or phrases from the source with signal words ("According to Source #1…").

Organization:

Transition Variety Chart:

- List sequencing and contrast transitions for students to choose from during revision.

"Hook + Bridge + Thesis" Practice:

- Teach how to craft introductions that move from general interest to a clear opinion statement.

Conclusion Refinement Workshop:

- Model how to replace repetitive endings with stronger restatements of the main idea.

Voice:

Voice Contrast Exercise:

- Provide a "neutral" and "persuasive" version of the same paragraph; discuss how tone affects engagement.

"Add Yourself" Writing Prompt:

- Ask students to include one personal sentence per paragraph to increase sincerity.

Persuasive Sentence Frames:

- Offer sentence stems like "This shows that…" or "That's why…" to boost conviction.

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 practice moving from simple to vivid vocabulary using weather-related terms.

Topic Word Wall:

- Display Florida and Colorado vocabulary (humidity, altitude, lightning, hail) and encourage natural integration.

Descriptive Sentence Expansion:

- Students choose one plain sentence and rewrite it using sensory and descriptive detail.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Starter Chart:

- Show examples of varied openings ("When," "Because," "Although") and practice rewriting sentences.

Sentence Combining Routine:

- Guide students to combine two simple sentences into one with a conjunction.

Read-Aloud Fluency Check:

- Have students read aloud their essays to hear where pacing sounds repetitive or awkward.

Conventions:

Editing Checklist Routine:

- Provide a list for commas, capitals, and paragraph spacing before final drafts.

Peer Editing Pass:

- Students exchange papers to find two punctuation or capitalization corrections.

Sentence Fluency + Conventions Combo Check:

- Combine grammar review with oral reading to hear punctuation flow.

Use of Sources:

Source Sentence Frames:

- Provide sentence starters for citing sources accurately and naturally.

"Fact + Opinion Connection" Practice:

- Students pair one factual sentence with one opinion sentence in a short writing exercise.

Balanced Evidence Chart:

- Students record one detail from each source to ensure both perspectives are included.