Grade 4 – Opinion Writing Work Sample: Approaching

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 paper develops a clear main idea with strong supporting details from the sources. The writer expands with explanations and examples, showing good understanding of what astronauts do before and during space travel. Some minor parts could use more elaboration, but overall, ideas are relevant, organized, and engaging.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Opinion and Purpose** ○ The opinion is stated directly: *"I'd rather stick with Colorado."* ○ The writer maintains focus on preferring Colorado throughout the essay. ○ Meets the rubric's "writer's purpose and main ideas are easy to understand."
✓ **Relevant Details and Source Use** ○ Incorporates accurate information: *"In some parts of Florida there are over 80 days with thunder and lightning,"* and *"in Colorado you get more than 300 days of sweet sunshine."* ○ Shows understanding of both states, aligning with "the writer includes accurate facts and examples."
✓ **Development and Elaboration** ○ Reasons such as dramatic weather, outdoor snow activities, and too many thunderstorms in Florida show understanding. ○ However, elaboration is inconsistent. Statements like *"I could make myself an igloo!"* and *"Take me off the waiting list for the houses there!"* are entertaining but lack factual explanation.
✓ **Focus and Relevance** ○ The essay stays on topic but occasionally wanders into humor or exaggeration ("better than Florida (of course not better than Maine)!"). ○ This reduces focus on factual reasoning and elaboration.

Organization: 3

The essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion, but ideas are unevenly grouped. The structure relies on storytelling and humor instead of clear, logical sequencing.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Introduction** ○ Creative and engaging ("Well see you later, I'm going to sunny sunny always sunny Florida!"), but the humor delays clarity of purpose.
✓ **Grouping and Order** ○ Paragraphs mix facts with commentary, causing uneven pacing. For example, the thunderstorm data appears mid-paragraph rather than being introduced earlier.
✓ **Transitions and Flow** ○ Some connecting words ("Another reason why…") appear, but transitions between ideas are inconsistent.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Conclusion and Closure** ○ The essay ends with a strong voice ("It's igloo time!!!!") but lacks a focused restatement of reasons or final summary.

Voice: 5

The writing is lively, sincere, and highly engaging. The humor and expressive phrasing show strong audience awareness and individuality.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Expressive and Engaging Tone** ○ The student's playful tone ("What? it isn't always sunny?" "It's igloo time!!!!") captures reader attention.
✓ **Sincerity and Personality** ○ The writing feels genuine and confident, aligning with "writing is lively, sincere, exciting, or honest."
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ The writer speaks directly to readers with humor and exaggeration, engaging them throughout.
✓ **Consistency of Voice** ○ The tone remains consistent, although it sometimes overshadows factual content.

Word Choice: 4

The vocabulary is expressive and vivid but uneven. Some words show creativity and imagery, while others are informal or repetitive.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Vivid and Original Phrases** ○ Creative expressions like *"sweet sunshine," "crazy rain,"* and *"It's igloo time"* add flair.
✓ **Content Vocabulary** ○ Incorporates source-based terms such as "thunderstorm capital" and "300 days of sunshine."
✓ **Repetition and Informality** ○ Overuse of casual words ("crazy," "stuff," "better") lowers precision.
✓ **Word Choice for Purpose** ○ Language matches opinion writing but could use stronger academic transitions.

Sentence Fluency: 3

The essay is readable and lively but lacks control and variety. Run-ons and inconsistent punctuation interrupt smooth flow.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable and Natural** ○ The essay reads easily but has run-ons ("Some sun here a little rain there and some snow to end the day.").
✓ **Variety in Sentence Lengths** ○ Sentences range from very short to overly long, affecting rhythm.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Transitions Between Ideas** ○ Transitions exist but are limited ("Another reason why…").
✓ **Readability and Structure** ○ Punctuation errors disrupt fluency in multiple spots (missing spaces after periods, commas misplaced).

Conventions: 2

Frequent punctuation, spacing, and capitalization errors distract from meaning. Grammar control is inconsistent but ideas remain clear.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Punctuation** ○ Missing commas and spaces throughout (e.g., "Florida!What?it isn't always sunny?").
✓ **Capitalization** ○ Inconsistent ("i don't want Florida," "lets hop on that plane").
✓ **Spelling and Grammar** ○ Mostly correct spelling but several informal fragments and missing capitalization. ○ Grammar errors interrupt sentence flow.

Use of Sources: 4

The writer integrates factual information from both Florida and Colorado sources, though references are indirect and informal.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Information** ○ Mentions facts such as "Florida has over 80 days with thunder and lightning" and "Colorado has more than 300 days of sunshine." ○ Both are accurate and reflect comprehension of the readings.
✓ **Paraphrasing and Integration** ○ Facts are rewritten in the student's own words but without formal citation.
✓ **Balance of Sources** ○ Uses facts from both *Source #1* (thunderstorm data) and *Source #2* (Colorado's sunshine and weather changes).
✓ **Citation and Clarity** ○ References are natural but missing signal phrases ("According to Source #1…").