

PLAN[®]



CONNECTING
COLLEGE READINESS
STANDARDS[™]
TO THE CLASSROOM

For Language Arts Teachers/
English

ACT[®]

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INTRODUCTION

ACT has developed this guide to help classroom teachers, curriculum coordinators, and counselors interpret the College Readiness Standards™ report for PLAN® English. The guide includes:

- A description of the **College Readiness Standards** for PLAN
- A description of the **PLAN English Test**
- A set of **sample test questions**
- A description of the **Assessment-Instruction Link**
- A set of classroom **instructional activities**

The College Readiness Standards for PLAN are statements that describe what students who score in the five score ranges 13–15, 16–19, 20–23, 24–27 and 28–32 are *likely* to know and to be able to do. The statements are generalizations based on the performance of many students scoring in these five score ranges. College Readiness Standards have not been developed for students whose scores fall in the 1–12 range because these students, as a group, do not demonstrate skills similar to each other consistently enough to permit useful generalizations.

The College Readiness Standards for PLAN are accompanied by ideas for progress that help teachers identify ways of enhancing student learning based on the scores students receive.

The College Readiness Standards Information Services provide five aggregate reports for PLAN. Four of these reports are content specific: each presents the scores of your students in each of the four content areas the PLAN test measures—English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. These four content-specific reports present PLAN results using

ACT's College Readiness Standards. The fifth report, the Summary Profile, summarizes the scores of your students across all four content areas. All five reports provide data that compare the performance of your students (Local) with all students in a nationally representative comparison group (norm group) and with a subgroup of those students who have indicated that they plan to attend college.

PLAN is a curriculum-based assessment program developed by ACT to help tenth graders plan their academic careers and prepare for entry into college or the world of work. As part of ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS™), PLAN is complemented by EXPLORE®, ACT's eighth- and ninth-grade program, and by the ACT®, for eleventh and twelfth graders. We hope this guide helps you assist your students as they plan and pursue their future studies.

“The role of standardized testing is to let parents, students, and institutions know what students are ready to learn next.”

— Ralph Tyler, October 1991
Chairman Emeritus of
ACT's Board of Trustees

THE COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS REPORT FOR PLAN ENGLISH

The College Readiness Standards report for PLAN English allows you to compare the performance of students in your school with the performance of students nationwide. The report provides summary information you can use to map the development of your students' knowledge and skills in writing. Used along with your own classroom observations and with other resources, the test results can help you to analyze your students' progress in writing and to identify areas of strength and areas that need more attention. You can then use the Standards as one source of information in the instructional planning process.

A sample report appears on the next page. An explanation of its features is provided below.

A This section briefly explains the uses of the report to help you interpret the test results.

B These are the six score ranges reported for the College Readiness Standards for PLAN. To determine the number of score ranges and the width of each score range, ACT staff reviewed normative data, college admission criteria, and information obtained through ACT's Course Placement Service. For a more detailed explanation of the way the score ranges were determined, see page 5.

C This section compares the percent of students who scored in a particular score range at an individual school (Local) with the percent of all tenth-grade students in the norm group and with a subgroup of college-bound tenth-grade students who scored in the same range. The percent of students for the norm group and subgroup is based on the most current set of nationally representative norms. The number of local school students who scored in each of the six score ranges is provided in the column to the left of each bar graph; the total number of tenth-grade students tested locally is provided at the top of the report.

D The College Readiness Standards were developed by identifying the knowledge and skills students need in order to respond successfully to questions on the PLAN English Test. As you review the report for PLAN English, you will note that the Standards are cumulative, which means that if students score, for example, in the 20–23 score range, they are likely to be able to demonstrate most or all of the knowledge and skills in the 13–15, 16–19, and 20–23 score ranges. Students may be able to demonstrate some of the skills in the next score range, 24–27, but not consistently enough as a group to reach that score range. A description of the way the College Readiness Standards were developed can be found on pages 5–6.

E The “ideas for progress” are statements that provide suggestions for learning experiences that students might benefit from. These ideas for progress are arranged by score range and strand. Although many of the ideas cross more than one strand, a primary strand has been identified for each in order to facilitate their use in the classroom. Ideas for progress are provided for the 28–32 score range, the highest score range for PLAN. The ideas for the 28–32 score range are shown to suggest educational experiences from which students may benefit before they take the ACT.

F Page 2 of the report profiles the test results, College Readiness Standards, and ideas for progress for score ranges 24–27 and 28–32.



College Readiness Standards Information Services

The College Readiness Standards report for PLAN English allows you to compare the performance of students in your school with the performance of students nationwide. For an explanation of the report's features, see page 2 in the English guide *Connecting College Readiness Standards to the Classroom*.

Sample School (000000)
Standard Report
Any Town, US

Number of Students: 282
Grade: 10
2005-2006 Academic Year

PLAN® English Report

A

Score Range	No. of Students	Percentage			Standards	Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus	Organization, Unity, and Coherence	Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy	Sentence Structure and Formation	Conventions of Usage	Conventions of Punctuation
		Local	College-Bound	National							
1-12	15				Ideas for progressing to 15-15 score range <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read and discuss the work of favorite writers regularly write informal responses to literature (fiction and nonfiction) in their journals identify sentences that convey the main ideas in a variety of texts and then practice composing such sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> write short texts in a variety of genres, illustrating simple organization use paragraphing as an organizational device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> write writing to clarify sentences containing too many phrases and clauses check writing to make sure pronoun references are clear revise writing to edit out empty words (e.g., <i>really, very, big, kind of</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vary sentence length by combining simple sentences check writing to make sure verb tenses are consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make sure to use adjectives like <i>well, less, and worst</i> correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn to recognize when commas are overused 	
13-15	24										Ideas for progressing to 16-19 score range <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read writers of various genres and imitate their work revise writing to ensure that every sentence is necessary to the purpose of the piece and that no important information has been left out
16-19	96				Ideas for progressing to 20-25 score range <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue reading writers of various genres and imitating their work write longer and more complicated essays, stories, reviews, etc. state the main theme of or summarize essays they have written revise essays by eliminating sentences or ideas that violate the essay's focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> write many simply organized short texts of various genres revise writing to ensure that information is in the best order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and revise obviously wordy, redundant, or cluttered material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise writing to correct glaring shifts in verb tense or voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise writing to correct basic grammar and punctuation errors practice and understand correct usage of common homonyms (e.g., <i>their/there, past/passed</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> practice using punctuation correctly in simple sentences (e.g., "We ran, jumped, and swam.") check for and correct unnecessary commas 	
20-23	103										Ideas for progressing to 24-25 score range <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue reading the work of writers of various genres; begin experimenting with a variety of writing styles revise fairly straightforward writing to sharpen focus and coherence of entire piece
24-27	29				Ideas for progressing to 28-32 score range <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop awareness of ways that form and content can be changed as the audience for the writing changes learn how meaning can be expressed through connotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize and experiment with more sophisticated organizational structures (e.g., comparison-contrast, cause-effect) revise writing to delete illogical conjunctive adverbs discuss the most logical place to add specific information in a draft essay discuss the purpose and the importance of the opening paragraph for directing the rest of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> delete redundant material when information is repeated in different parts of speech (e.g., "alarmingly startling") use the word or phrase most consistent with the style and tone of a fairly straightforward essay determine the clearest and most logical conjunction to link clauses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize and correct marked disturbances of sentence flow and structure (e.g., participial phrase fragments, missing or incorrect relative pronouns, dangling or misplaced modifiers) use idiomatically appropriate prepositions, especially in combination with verbs (e.g., <i>long for, appeal to</i>) ensure that a verb agrees with its subject when there is some text between the two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use commas to set off simple parenthetical phrases delete unnecessary commas when an incorrect reading of the sentence suggests a pause that should be punctuated (e.g., between verb and direct object clause) 		
28-32	15									Ideas for progressing to 33-38 score range (ACT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> write essays that indicate a heightened awareness of the audience for those essays recognize the role that specific sentences play in terms of the essay as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experiment with using words and phrases that create clear transitions in writing rearrange sentences in a paragraph in order to improve its coherence write introductions that capture the reader's interest, write conclusions that provide a sense of closure, and describe the rhetorical effects that each creates

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continued

Score Range	No. of Students	Percentage			Standards	Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus	Organization, Unity, and Coherence	Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy	Sentence Structure and Formation	Conventions of Usage	Conventions of Punctuation
		Local	College-Bound	National							
24-27	29				Ideas for progressing to 28-32 score range <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop awareness of ways that form and content can be changed as the audience for the writing changes learn how meaning can be expressed through connotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine the need for conjunctive adverbs or phrases to create subtle logical connections between sentences (e.g., <i>therefore, however, in addition</i>) rearrange the sentences in a fairly uncomplicated paragraph for the sake of logic add a sentence to introduce or conclude the essay or to provide a transition between paragraphs when the essay is fairly straightforward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise a phrase that is redundant in terms of the meaning and logic of the entire sentence identify and correct ambiguous pronoun references use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence and tone of the essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise to avoid faulty placement of phrases and faulty coordination and subordination of clauses in sentences with subtle structural problems maintain consistent verb tense and pronoun person on the basis of the preceding clause or sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that a pronoun agrees with its antecedent when the two occur in separate clauses or sentences identify the correct past and past participle forms of irregular and infrequently used verbs and form present-perfect verbs by using <i>have</i> rather than <i>of</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use punctuation to set off complex parenthetical phrases recognize and delete unnecessary commas based on a careful reading of a complicated sentence (e.g., between the elements of a compound subject or compound verb joined by <i>and</i>) use apostrophes to indicate simple possessive nouns recognize inappropriate uses of colons and semicolons 	
28-32	15										Ideas for progressing to 33-38 score range (ACT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> write essays that indicate a heightened awareness of the audience for those essays recognize the role that specific sentences play in terms of the essay as a whole
33-38	15				Ideas for progressing to 39-44 score range (ACT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> write essays that indicate a heightened awareness of the audience for those essays recognize the role that specific sentences play in terms of the essay as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make sophisticated distinctions concerning the logical use of conjunctive adverbs or phrases, particularly when signaling a shift between paragraphs rearrange sentences to improve the logic and coherence of a complex paragraph add a sentence to introduce or conclude a fairly complex paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correct redundant material that involves sophisticated vocabulary and sounds acceptable as conversational English (e.g., "an aesthetic viewpoint" versus "the outlook of an aesthetic viewpoint") correct vague and wordy or clumsy and confusing writing containing sophisticated language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use sentence-combining techniques, effectively avoiding problematic comma splices, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments, especially in sentences containing compound subjects or verbs maintain a consistent and logical use of verb tense and pronoun person on the basis of information in the paragraph or essay as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correctly use reflexive pronouns, the possessive pronouns <i>its</i> and <i>your</i>, and the relative pronouns <i>who</i> and <i>whom</i> ensure that a verb agrees with its subject in unusual situations (e.g., when the subject-verb order is inverted or when the subject is an indefinite pronoun) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use commas to set off a nonessential/nonrestrictive appositive or clause deal with multiple punctuation problems (e.g., compound sentences containing unnecessary commas and phrases that may or may not be parenthetical) use an apostrophe to show possession, especially with irregular plural nouns use a semicolon to indicate a relationship between closely related independent clauses 	
39-44	15										Ideas for progressing to 45-50 score range (ACT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> write essays that indicate a heightened awareness of the audience for those essays recognize the role that specific sentences play in terms of the essay as a whole

DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS

WHAT ARE THE COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS?

The College Readiness Standards communicate educational expectations. Each Standard describes what students who score in the designated range are *likely* to be able to do with what they know. Students can typically demonstrate the skills and knowledge within the score ranges preceding the range in which they scored, so the College Readiness Standards are cumulative.

In helping students make the transition from high school to postsecondary education or to the world of work, teachers, counselors, and parents can use the College Readiness Standards for PLAN to interpret students' scores and to understand which skills students need to develop to be better prepared for the future.

HOW WERE THE SCORE RANGES DETERMINED?

To determine the number of score ranges and the width of each score range for PLAN, ACT staff reviewed PLAN normative data and considered the relationship among EXPLORE, PLAN, and the ACT.

In reviewing the PLAN normative data, ACT staff analyzed the distribution of student scores across the score scale. Because PLAN and the ACT have a common score scale, ACT can provide PLAN examinees with an estimated ACT Composite score. When the score ranges were being determined, therefore, both the PLAN score scale, 1–32, and the ACT score scale, 1–36, were reviewed side by side. And because many students take PLAN to determine how well they might perform on the ACT, the course-placement research that ACT has conducted over the last forty years was also reviewed. ACT's Course

Placement Service provides colleges and universities with cutoff scores that are used to place students into appropriate entry-level courses in college; and these cutoff scores were used to help define the score ranges.

After analyzing all the data and reviewing different possible score ranges, ACT staff concluded that using the six score ranges 1–12, 13–15, 16–19, 20–23, 24–27, and 28–32 would best distinguish students' levels of achievement so as to assist teachers, administrators, and others in relating PLAN test scores to students' attainment of specific skills and understandings.

HOW WERE THE COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS DEVELOPED?

After reviewing normative data, college admission criteria, and information obtained through ACT's Course Placement Service, content experts wrote the College Readiness Standards based on their analysis of the skills and knowledge students need in order to successfully respond to the test questions in each score range. Experts analyzed numerous test questions that had been answered correctly by 80%

“The examination should describe the student in meaningful terms—meaningful to the student, the parent, and the elementary and high school teacher—meaningful in the sense that the profile scores correspond to recognizable school activities, and directly suggest appropriate distributions of emphasis in learning and teaching.”

— E. F. Lindquist, February 1958
Cofounder of ACT

or more of the examinees within each score range. The 80% criterion was chosen because it offers those who use the College Readiness Standards a high degree of confidence that students scoring in a given score range will most *likely* be able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge described in that range.

As a content validity check, ACT invited nationally recognized scholars from high school and university English and Education departments to review the College Readiness Standards for the PLAN English Test. These teachers and researchers provided ACT with independent, authoritative reviews of the ways the College Readiness Standards reflect the skills and knowledge students need to successfully respond to the questions on the PLAN English Test.

Because PLAN is curriculum based, ACT and independent consultants conduct a review every three to four years to ensure that the knowledge and skills described in the Standards and outlined in the test specifications continue to reflect those being taught in classrooms nationwide.

HOW SHOULD THE COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS BE INTERPRETED AND USED?

The College Readiness Standards reflect the progression and complexity of the skills measured in PLAN. Because no PLAN test form measures all of the skills and knowledge included in the College Readiness Standards, the Standards must be interpreted as skills and knowledge that *most* students who score in a particular score range are *likely* to be able to demonstrate. Since there were relatively few test questions that were answered correctly by 80% or more of the students who scored in the lower score ranges, the Standards in these ranges should be interpreted cautiously. The skills and understandings of students who score in the 1–12 score range may still be evolving. For these students the skills and understandings in the higher score ranges could become their target achievement outcomes.

It is important to recognize that PLAN does not measure everything students have learned nor does any test measure everything necessary for students to know to be successful in college or in the world of work. The PLAN English Test includes questions from

a large domain of skills and from areas of knowledge that have been judged important for success in college and beyond. Thus, the College Readiness Standards should be interpreted in a responsible way that will help students understand what they need to know and do if they are going to make a successful transition to college, vocational school, or the world of work. As students choose courses they plan to take in high school, they can use the Standards to identify the skills and knowledge they need to develop to be better prepared for their future. Teachers and curriculum coordinators can use the Standards to learn more about their students' academic strengths and weaknesses and can then modify their instruction and guide students accordingly.

HOW ARE THE COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS ORGANIZED?

As content experts reviewed the test questions connected to each score range, distinct yet overlapping areas of knowledge and skill were identified. For example, there are many types of questions in which students are asked to think about ways of correcting the organization of a paragraph or passage. Therefore, *Organization, Unity, and Coherence* is one area, or *strand*, within the College Readiness Standards for PLAN English. The other strands are *Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus; Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy; Sentence Structure and Formation; Conventions of Usage; and Conventions of Punctuation*.

The strands provide an organizational framework for the College Readiness Standards statements. As you review the Standards, you will note a progression in complexity within each strand. For example, in the 13–15 range for the Organization, Unity, and Coherence strand, students are able to “use conjunctive adverbs or phrases to show time relationships in simple narrative essays (e.g., *then, this time*),” while in the 28–32 range, students demonstrate that they are able to “make sophisticated distinctions concerning the logical use of conjunctive adverbs or phrases, particularly when signaling a shift between paragraphs.”

The Standards are complemented by brief descriptions of learning experiences from which high school students might benefit. Based on the College Readiness Standards, these ideas for progress are designed to provide classroom teachers with help for lesson plan development. These ideas, which are given in Table 1, demonstrate one way that information learned from standardized test results can be used to inform classroom instruction.

Because students learn over time and in various contexts, it is important to use a variety of instructional methods and materials to meet students' diverse needs and to help strengthen and build upon their knowledge and skills. The ideas for progress offer teachers a variety of suggestions to foster learning experiences from which students would likely benefit as they move from one level of learning to the next.

Because learning is a complex and individual process, it is especially important to use multiple sources of information—classroom observations and teacher-developed assessment tools, as well as standardized tests—to accurately reflect what each student knows and can do. The Standards and ideas for progress, used in conjunction with classroom-based and curricular resources, help teachers and administrators to guide the whole education of every student.

WHAT ARE THE PLAN ENGLISH TEST COLLEGE READINESS STANDARDS?

Table 1 on pages 8–13 suggests links between what students are *likely* to be able to do (the College Readiness Standards) and what learning experiences students would likely benefit from.

The College Readiness Standards are organized both by score range (along the left-hand side) and by strand (across the top). The lack of a College Readiness Standards statement in a score range indicates that there was insufficient evidence with which to determine a descriptor.

The ideas for progress are also arranged by score range and by strand. Although many of the ideas cross more than one strand, a primary strand has been identified for each in order to facilitate their use in the classroom. For example, the statement in the 24–27 score range “experiment with more subtle organizational structures” brings together concepts from several strands, such as Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus and Organization, Unity, and Coherence. However, this idea is primarily linked to the Organization, Unity, and Coherence strand.

As you review the table, you will note that ideas for progress have been provided for the 28–32 score range, the highest score range for PLAN. PLAN is designed to measure knowledge and skills achieved through the tenth grade. Ideas for progress for the 28–32 score range are shown to suggest educational experiences from which students may benefit before they take the ACT and enter college.

**PLAN
ENGLISH
TEST**

Table 1: The College Readiness Standards

The Standards describe what students who score in the specified score ranges are *likely* to know and to be able to do. The ideas for progress help teachers identify ways of enhancing students' learning based on the scores students receive.

		Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus	Organization, Unity, and Coherence	Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy
1–12	Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who score in the 1–12 range are most likely beginning to develop the knowledge and skills assessed in the other score ranges. 		
	ideas for progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> read and discuss the work of favorite writers regularly write informal responses to literature (fiction and nonfiction) in their journals identify sentences that convey the main ideas in a variety of texts and then practice composing such sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> write short texts in a variety of genres, illustrating simple organization use paragraphing as an organizational device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise writing to clarify sentences containing too many phrases and clauses check writing to make sure pronoun references are clear revise writing to edit out empty words (e.g., <i>really, very, big, kind of</i>)
13–15	Standards		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use conjunctive adverbs or phrases to show time relationships in simple narrative essays (e.g., <i>then, this time</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise sentences to correct awkward and confusing arrangements of sentence elements Revise vague nouns and pronouns that create obvious logic problems
	ideas for progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> read writers of various genres and imitate their work revise writing to ensure that every sentence is necessary to the purpose of the piece and that no important information has been left out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> write many simply organized short texts of various genres revise writing to ensure that information is in the best order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and revise obviously wordy, redundant, or cluttered material
16–19	Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the basic purpose or role of a specified phrase or sentence Delete a clause or sentence because it is obviously irrelevant to the essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select the most logical place to add a sentence in a paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delete obviously synonymous and wordy material in a sentence Revise expressions that deviate from the style of an essay
	ideas for progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue reading writers of various genres and imitating their work write longer and more complicated essays, stories, reviews, etc. state the main theme of or summarize essays they have written revise essays by eliminating sentences or ideas that violate the essay's focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize and experiment with more sophisticated organizational structures (e.g., comparison-contrast, cause-effect) revise writing to delete illogical conjunctive adverbs discuss the most logical place to add specific information in a draft essay discuss the purpose and the importance of the opening paragraph for directing the rest of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise writing to make it more concise and precise discuss and model tone and style

<i>Sentence Structure and Formation</i>	<i>Conventions of Usage</i>	<i>Conventions of Punctuation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ vary sentence length by combining simple sentences ■ check writing to make sure verb tenses are consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ make sure to use adjectives like <i>well</i>, <i>less</i>, and <i>worst</i> correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ learn to recognize when commas are overused
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use conjunctions or punctuation to join simple clauses ■ Revise shifts in verb tense between simple clauses in a sentence or between simple adjoining sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Solve such basic grammatical problems as how to form the past and past participle of irregular but commonly used verbs and how to form comparative and superlative adjectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Delete commas that create basic sense problems (e.g., between verb and direct object)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revise writing to correct glaring shifts in verb tense or voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revise writing to correct basic grammar and punctuation errors ■ practice and understand correct usage of common homonyms (e.g., <i>their/there</i>, <i>past/passed</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ practice using punctuation correctly in simple sentences (e.g., "He ran, jumped, and swam.") ■ check for and correct unnecessary commas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Determine the need for punctuation and conjunctions to avoid awkward-sounding sentence fragments and fused sentences ■ Decide the appropriate verb tense and voice by considering the meaning of the entire sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Solve such grammatical problems as whether to use an adverb or an adjective form, how to ensure straightforward subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement, and which preposition to use in simple contexts ■ Recognize and use the appropriate word in frequently confused pairs such as <i>there</i> and <i>their</i>, <i>past</i> and <i>passed</i>, and <i>led</i> and <i>lead</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide appropriate punctuation in straightforward situations (e.g., items in a series) ■ Delete commas that disturb the sentence flow (e.g., between modifier and modified element)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ experiment with writing more sophisticated sentences; check to ensure verbs agree with subjects and modifiers don't dangle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revise sentences to ensure that each verb agrees with its subject when there is some text between the two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use commas to set off parenthetical phrases

**PLAN
ENGLISH
TEST**

Table 1 (continued): The College Readiness Standards

The Standards describe what students who score in the specified score ranges are *likely* to know and to be able to do. The ideas for progress help teachers identify ways of enhancing students' learning based on the scores students receive.

		Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus	Organization, Unity, and Coherence	Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy
20–23	Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify the central idea or main topic of a straightforward piece of writing ■ Determine relevancy when presented with a variety of sentence-level details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use conjunctive adverbs or phrases to express straightforward logical relationships (e.g., <i>first, afterward, in response</i>) ■ Decide the most logical place to add a sentence in an essay ■ Add a sentence that introduces a simple paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Delete redundant material when information is repeated in different parts of speech (e.g., “alarmingly startled”) ■ Use the word or phrase most consistent with the style and tone of a fairly straightforward essay ■ Determine the clearest and most logical conjunction to link clauses
	ideas for progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ continue reading the work of writers of various genres; begin experimenting with a variety of writing styles ■ revise fairly straightforward writing to sharpen focus and coherence of entire piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ experiment with using words and phrases that create clear transitions in writing ■ rearrange sentences in a paragraph in order to improve its coherence ■ write introductions that capture the reader's interest, write conclusions that provide a sense of closure, and describe the rhetorical effects that each creates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ continue to edit sentences for empty language, wordiness, and redundancy ■ revise structurally complex sentences to correct vague or ambiguous pronoun references
24–27	Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify the focus of a simple essay, applying that knowledge to add a sentence that sharpens that focus or to determine if an essay has met a specified goal ■ Delete material primarily because it disturbs the flow and development of the paragraph ■ Add a sentence to accomplish a fairly straightforward purpose such as illustrating a given statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Determine the need for conjunctive adverbs or phrases to create subtle logical connections between sentences (e.g., <i>therefore, however, in addition</i>) ■ Rearrange the sentences in a fairly uncomplicated paragraph for the sake of logic ■ Add a sentence to introduce or conclude the essay or to provide a transition between paragraphs when the essay is fairly straightforward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Revise a phrase that is redundant in terms of the meaning and logic of the entire sentence ■ Identify and correct ambiguous pronoun references ■ Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence and tone of the essay
	ideas for progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop awareness of ways that form and content can be changed as the audience for the writing changes ■ learn how meaning can be expressed through connotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ experiment with more subtle organizational structures ■ revise writing by refining introductions, conclusions, and transitions in complex paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ select and manipulate words, phrases, and clauses to convey shades of meaning and tone ■ avoid clutter and use vivid verbs and specific nouns

Sentence Structure and Formation	Conventions of Usage	Conventions of Punctuation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognize and correct marked disturbances of sentence flow and structure (e.g., participial phrase fragments, missing or incorrect relative pronouns, dangling or misplaced modifiers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use idiomatically appropriate prepositions, especially in combination with verbs (e.g., <i>long for</i>, <i>appeal to</i>) ■ Ensure that a verb agrees with its subject when there is some text between the two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use commas to set off simple parenthetical phrases ■ Delete unnecessary commas when an incorrect reading of the sentence suggests a pause that should be punctuated (e.g., between verb and direct object clause)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revise writing to correct faulty coordination and subordination of clauses ■ revise sentences to correct inconsistencies in verb tense and pronoun person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ check to be sure pronouns agree with antecedents in increasingly complex sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use punctuation to set off nonessential information in a sentence ■ recognize inappropriate uses of commas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Revise to avoid faulty placement of phrases and faulty coordination and subordination of clauses in sentences with subtle structural problems ■ Maintain consistent verb tense and pronoun person on the basis of the preceding clause or sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that a pronoun agrees with its antecedent when the two occur in separate clauses or sentences ■ Identify the correct past and past participle forms of irregular and infrequently used verbs and form present-perfect verbs by using <i>have</i> rather than <i>of</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use punctuation to set off complex parenthetical phrases ■ Recognize and delete unnecessary commas based on a careful reading of a complicated sentence (e.g., between the elements of a compound subject or a compound verb joined by <i>and</i>) ■ Use apostrophes to indicate simple possessive nouns ■ Recognize inappropriate uses of colons and semicolons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use sentence-combining techniques to create more sophisticated sentences; check to avoid fragments, comma splices, and run-ons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ recognize the difference between <i>its</i> and <i>it's</i>, <i>your</i> and <i>you're</i>, <i>who</i> and <i>whom</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use commas to set off nonessential appositives or clauses ■ use semicolons to indicate relationships between independent clauses

**PLAN
ENGLISH
TEST**

Table 1 (continued): The College Readiness Standards

The Standards describe what students who score in the specified score ranges are *likely* to know and to be able to do. The ideas for progress help teachers identify ways of enhancing students' learning based on the scores students receive.

		<i>Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus</i>	<i>Organization, Unity, and Coherence</i>	<i>Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy</i>
28–32	Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply an awareness of the focus and purpose of a fairly involved essay to determine the rhetorical effect and suitability of an existing phrase or sentence, or to determine the need to delete plausible but irrelevant material ■ Add a sentence to accomplish a subtle rhetorical purpose such as to emphasize, to add supporting detail, or to express meaning through connotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Make sophisticated distinctions concerning the logical use of conjunctive adverbs or phrases, particularly when signaling a shift between paragraphs ■ Rearrange sentences to improve the logic and coherence of a complex paragraph ■ Add a sentence to introduce or conclude a fairly complex paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Correct redundant material that involves sophisticated vocabulary and sounds acceptable as conversational English (e.g., “an aesthetic viewpoint” versus “the outlook of an aesthetic viewpoint”) ■ Correct vague and wordy or clumsy and confusing writing containing sophisticated language
	ideas for progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ write essays that indicate a heightened awareness of the audience for those essays ■ recognize the role that specific sentences play in terms of the essay as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revise or add introductory sentences or transitions based on an understanding of the logic and rhetorical purpose of the paragraph and the essay as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revise writing to delete redundancies in terms of the paragraph as a whole

<i>Sentence Structure and Formation</i>	<i>Conventions of Usage</i>	<i>Conventions of Punctuation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use sentence-combining techniques, effectively avoiding problematic comma splices, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments, especially in sentences containing compound subjects or verbs ■ Maintain a consistent and logical use of verb tense and pronoun person on the basis of information in the paragraph or essay as a whole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Correctly use reflexive pronouns, the possessive pronouns <i>its</i> and <i>your</i>, and the relative pronouns <i>who</i> and <i>whom</i> ■ Ensure that a verb agrees with its subject in unusual situations (e.g., when the subject-verb order is inverted or when the subject is an indefinite pronoun) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use commas to set off a nonessential/nonrestrictive appositive or clause ■ Deal with multiple punctuation problems (e.g., compound sentences containing unnecessary commas and phrases that may or may not be parenthetical) ■ Use an apostrophe to show possession, especially with irregular plural nouns ■ Use a semicolon to indicate a relationship between closely related independent clauses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ maintain parallel structure between phrases and clauses in a complex sentence ■ employ a variety of sentence structures in their writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ revise sentences to ensure agreement between verb and subject when a phrase between the two suggests a different number for the verb 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use the colon to introduce an example or an elaboration

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN ENGLISH TEST

WHAT DOES THE PLAN ENGLISH TEST MEASURE?

The PLAN English Test is designed to simulate one stage in the writing process—the editing and revising of a nearly finished draft. The emphasis of the English Test is on students’ application of sound writing practices. The test measures students’ ability to use the conventions of standard written English. Students are also required to choose language or a

style that is appropriate to a certain audience or writing goal, to choose among a variety of organizational formats, or to determine an overall writing strategy appropriate to the essay topic. The English Test essays and their accompanying test questions are primarily generated by, and are reviewed by, practicing classroom teachers, and thus reflect current teaching techniques and curricular emphases. Additional information about the PLAN English Test is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: **PLAN English Test Content Areas**
50 questions, 30 minutes, 4 essays (300 words each)

Content Area	Percentage of Questions
Usage/Mechanics	60%
Punctuation	14%
Grammar and Usage	18%
Sentence Structure	28%
Rhetorical Skills	40%
Strategy	12%
Organization	14%
Style	14%

The test questions range from those at the sentence level to those at the paragraph level and from those that ask about a section of the essay to those that ask about the essay as a whole. The sample passage below illustrates the test format.

Sample PLAN English Test Essay

A Student's Impression of Seoul

As a student in Seoul, Korea (arriving in a plane) I¹ learned to love its hectic streets and its fiery cuisine.² Seoul's street markets tantalize shoppers with interesting smells and sights: pungent leather goods, vividly, hued cloth,³ mysteriously colored vegetables, roasting poultry, and pickled pigs' heads. Hagglng can be intense and confusing. The streets themselves are bewildering. As in Seoul, the capital of⁴ South Korea, the streets in Washington, D.C., the capital⁴ of the United States,⁴ are confusing. Few avenues seem to have names; no buildings with⁵ numbers; and it's like really cool how the minor alleys⁶ twist in jigsaw patterns. New mail carriers must be sorely tested to learn every nook within his⁷ *gu* (district). There are no lanes of traffic; there is⁸ only a swirl of vehicles that makes crossing the street an adventure.

1. A. NO CHANGE
B. Korea (and it was in a plane I arrived)
C. Korea (traveling there in a plane),
D. Korea,
2. F. NO CHANGE
G. cuisine which impressed me.
H. cuisine which were striking.
J. cuisine, that is they were striking.
3. A. NO CHANGE
B. goods, vividly hued cloth,
C. goods, vividly, hued cloth
D. goods vividly, hued cloth
4. F. NO CHANGE
G. Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, also has, like Seoul, the capital of South Korea, confusing streets.
H. Both Washington, D.C., America's capital, and Seoul, South Korea's capital, have confusing streets.
J. DELETE the underlined portion.
5. A. NO CHANGE
B. no buildings having,
C. no buildings seem to have
D. seemingly none of the buildings with
6. F. NO CHANGE
G. it's really laudatory how the minor alleys
H. minor alleys
J. they
7. A. NO CHANGE
B. her
C. their
D. they're
8. F. NO CHANGE
G. was
H. were
J. are

Sample PLAN English Test Essay (continued)

Although the kitchens in Seoul are stocked with the same wide variety of foods found in the street markets, my strongest impression of Korean cooking can be summed up in just one word: *kimchi*. Kimchi is cabbage cut into strips, rolled into cylinders with peppers and garlic and ginger, left to ferment for weeks in large black pots, and then served cold. Kimchi is the national, dish of Korea.

Everyone eats it. In row after row of huge pots gracing

alleys and rooftops, which are batches of kimchi age

to real perfection. Everyone loves it.

If you ever went to Seoul, be prepared for a wonderful experience: get in the habit of keeping calm amid unfamiliar surroundings, looking both ways before you cross a street, and making sure you get plenty of water with dinner. With the right preparation, you too will learn to fully enjoy this fascinating city.

9. A. NO CHANGE
B. national dish, of
C. national dish of
D. national dish of,

10. F. NO CHANGE
G. rooftops,
H. rooftops, and
J. rooftops;

11. The writer wants to describe how it feels to eat kimchi so clearly and with so much detail that the reader almost experiences what it is like to eat a serving. Which choice does that best?
A. NO CHANGE
B. popular perfection.
C. be the way the Koreans like it.
D. a tongue-searing degree of spicy heat.

12. F. NO CHANGE
G. have went
H. go
J. gone

Answer Key	
Question	Answer
1	D
2	F
3	B
4	J
5	C
6	H
7	C
8	F
9	C
10	G
11	D
12	H

THE NEED FOR THINKING SKILLS

Every student comes to school with the ability to think, but to achieve their goals students need to develop skills such as learning to make new connections between texts and ideas, to understand increasingly complex concepts, and to think through their assumptions. Because of technological advances and the fast pace of our society, it is increasingly important that students not only know information but also know how to critique and manage that information. Students must be provided with the tools for ongoing learning; understanding, analysis, and generalization skills must be developed so that the learner is able to adapt to a variety of situations.

HOW ARE PLAN TEST QUESTIONS LINKED TO THINKING SKILLS?

Our belief in the importance of developing thinking skills in learners was a key factor in the development of PLAN. ACT believes that students' preparation for further learning is best assessed by measuring, as directly as possible, the academic skills that students have acquired and that they will need to perform at the next level of learning. The required academic skills can most directly be assessed by reproducing as faithfully as possible the complexity of the students' schoolwork. Therefore, the PLAN test questions are designed to determine how skillfully students solve problems, grasp implied meanings, draw inferences, evaluate ideas, and make judgments in subject-matter areas important to success in intellectual work both inside and outside school.

Table 3 on pages 18–23 provides sample test questions, organized by score range, that are linked to specific skills within each of the six English strands. It is important to note the increasing level of skill with writing that students scoring in the higher score ranges are able to demonstrate. The questions were chosen to illustrate the variety of content as well as the range of complexity within each strand. The sample test questions for the 13–15, 16–19, 20–23, 24–27, and 28–32 score ranges are examples of items answered correctly by 80% or more of the PLAN examinees who obtained scores in each of these five score ranges.

As you review the sample test questions, you will note that each correct answer is marked with an asterisk. Also note that a page number next to most sample test questions indicates where you will find the complete essay text. Italicized portions preceding many test questions are sentences quoted directly from each essay. When a page number is not given (N/A), the italicized portion provides sufficient information to answer the question.

***“Learning is not attained by chance,
it must be sought for with ardour and
attended to with diligence.”***

— Abigail Adams in a letter to
John Quincy Adams

Table 3: **PLAN Sample Test Questions by Score Range**
Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus Strand

Score Range	Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus	Sample Test Questions	Corresponds to essay on page:
13–15			
16–19	Identify the basic purpose or role of a specified phrase or sentence	By remarking that a creature with a brain “no larger than a grass seed” can accomplish what a scout bee does, the writer intended that we should share her sense of: *A. astonishment and delight. B. propriety and humor. C. annoyance and reservation. D. enthusiasm and relaxation.	76–77
20–23	Determine relevancy when presented with a variety of sentence-level details	<i>Although we hadn’t moved far, to a child who knew little more of the world than a farmhouse that we lived in and the fields that surrounded it, Syracuse seemed like the other side of the world.</i> A. NO CHANGE B. with windows C. that used to have a barn *D. DELETE the underlined portion.	N/A
24–27	Add a sentence to accomplish a fairly straightforward purpose such as illustrating a given statement	The writer would like to conclude the essay by linking its ending to its beginning. Which of the following sentences most effectively refers to the narrator’s memories presented in Paragraph 1? A. I guess that’s because I’m no longer an eleven-year-old. *B. When I think of great summer swimming, I can only think of that muddy ditch behind our farmhouse. C. When I go swimming, I go in those clean pools, however, because everyone else wants to go there. D. I find them hot and crowded and too sterile for my taste.	74–75
28–32	Add a sentence to accomplish a subtle rhetorical purpose such as to emphasize, to add supporting detail, or to express meaning through connotation	<i>The most logical system would be to number our presidents simply by counting the people who have served in that office. Granted, this approach would involve some minor revisions to the history books.</i> Which of the following sentences, if inserted here, would best promote the argument of the essay? *A. Logic is worth a few revisions, though. B. Look, for example, at how easily some presidential candidates win. C. It is difficult, in any case, to remember all the presidents in order. D. We should remember the work of historians is difficult.	68–69

Table 3: **PLAN Sample Test Questions by Score Range**
Organization, Unity, and Coherence Strand

Score Range	Organization, Unity, and Coherence	Sample Test Questions	Corresponds to essay on page:
13–15	Use conjunctive adverbs or phrases to show time relationships in simple narrative essays (e.g., <i>then, this time</i>)	<p><i>When once again I found myself in the north woods, standing on the shore of a clear lake under a bright moon and a sky filled with stars, I threw back my head and howled</i></p> <p>*A. NO CHANGE B. on the one hand C. furthermore D. later at a point in time</p>	N/A
16–19	Select the most logical place to add a sentence in a paragraph	<p><i>In modern times, dreams became the object of scientific research. In ancient times, the dreams of sorcerers and kings prompted expeditions, marriages, and wars.</i></p> <p>For the sake of coherence, the preceding sentence should be:</p> <p>A. where it is now. *B. placed after the first sentence in Paragraph 1. C. placed after what is presently the third sentence in Paragraph 2. D. placed at the end of Paragraph 2.</p>	78–79
20–23	Use conjunctive adverbs or phrases to express straightforward logical relationships (e.g., <i>first, afterward, in response</i>)	<p><i>When our plane arrived a few minutes later, <u>though</u>, I began to regret my decision.</i></p> <p>*A. NO CHANGE B. besides, C. therefore, D. for instance,</p>	70–71
24–27	Add a sentence to introduce or conclude the essay or to provide a transition between paragraphs when the essay is fairly straightforward	<p><i>Now, months after our good-byes, my thoughts go to my little brother, who always loves attention—whether it’s for his lively drawings or his wild dreadlocks. I wonder if he misses New York at all. I remember the way he used to tag along as I walked to the nearby candy store. Now he lives in a house near the beach. I wouldn’t mind <u>the ocean view</u>.</i></p> <p>Given that all the choices are true, which one ends the paragraph with an idea that is consistent with the focus of this paragraph?</p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. going for a walk right now, come to think of it. *C. tagging along with him for a swim. D. getting a job this summer at the beach.</p>	N/A
28–32	Add a sentence to introduce or conclude a fairly complex paragraph	<p>Given that all are accurate, which of the following sentences, if added here, would most effectively advance the narrative from the description of playing in the ditch in Paragraph 3 to the narrator’s reaction to the swimming pool in Paragraph 4?</p> <p>A. Living in the city has its disadvantages. *B. When I was eleven we moved into the city. C. I wish I could be that young again. D. I wish we still lived on the farm.</p>	74–75

Table 3: **PLAN Sample Test Questions by Score Range**
Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy Strand

Score Range	Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy	Sample Test Questions	Corresponds to essay on page:
13–15	Revise vague nouns and pronouns that create obvious logic problems	<p><i>Entranced by the whirling motion of the wheel, I watched with awe as the clay was transformed into an earthenware vase by Cora’s artistry.</i></p> <p>*A. NO CHANGE B. this C. the vase D. it</p>	80–81
16–19	<p>Revise expressions that deviate from the style of an essay</p> <p>Delete obviously synonymous and wordy material in a sentence</p>	<p><i>Since then, I’ve hidden it in a series of unlikely places—the back of my sweater drawer, an old jewelry box, a cookbook full of really gross recipes—so that I stumble upon it when I least expect to.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. rarely used cookbook I never consult— C. cookbook I almost never use because it’s outdated and unused— *D. rarely used cookbook—</p>	N/A
20–23	Delete redundant material when information is repeated in different parts of speech (e.g., “alarmingly startled”)	<p><i>For greater air circulation, he turned on an overhead fan, hanging above, and the slow blades softly stirred the tranquility of the room.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. fan hanging from above, *C. fan, D. fan from the ceiling,</p>	N/A
24–27	Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence and tone of the essay	<p><i>He and I initiated further discourse and, as we talked, I began to feel better.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. started talking again C. resumed verbal commerce D. started chewing the fat again</p>	70–71
28–32	Correct vague and wordy or clumsy and confusing writing containing sophisticated language	<p><i>John is probably a great cook, but in writing his paper he forgot that the reader might be woefully uninformed because of the fact that he did not know anything about pizza making.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. he, the reader, was uninformed by virtue of the fact that he did *C. the reader might D. the reader lacked the necessary knowledge and thus being one who did</p>	N/A

Table 3: **PLAN Sample Test Questions by Score Range**
Sentence Structure and Formation Strand

Score Range	Sentence Structure and Formation	Sample Test Questions	Corresponds to essay on page:
13–15	Revise shifts in verb tense between simple clauses in a sentence or between simple adjoining sentences	<p><i>Determined to prove my bravery, I marched up the walkway and knocked on the door. After a moment, a small, elderly lady <u>had answered</u>.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. answers. *C. answered. D. is there answering.</p>	N/A
16–19	Determine the need for punctuation and conjunctions to avoid awkward-sounding sentence fragments and fused sentences	<p><i>Yet that was the story of James Connolly of <u>Boston</u>, he who in 1896 became the first gold medal winner of the modern Olympic Games.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. Boston. Who *C. Boston, who D. Boston. He who</p>	N/A
20–23	Recognize and correct marked disturbances of sentence flow and structure (e.g., participial phrase fragments, missing or incorrect relative pronouns, dangling or misplaced modifiers)	<p><i>Then, finally, leaning back and closing his eyes, <u>he relaxes</u>.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. he’s relaxed. *C. he relaxed. D. he begins to relax.</p>	70–71
24–27	Revise to avoid faulty placement of phrases and faulty coordination and subordination of clauses in sentences with subtle structural problems	<p><i>A better way of reckoning would be to distinguish between the number of presidencies <u>to those of</u> presidents.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. and the number of C. of that of D. of those and</p>	68–69
28–32	Use sentence-combining techniques, effectively avoiding problematic comma splices, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments, especially in sentences containing compound subjects or verbs	<p><i>In row after row of huge pots gracing alleys and <u>rooftops</u>, which are batches of kimchi age to real perfection.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. rooftops, C. rooftops, and D. rooftops;</p>	15–16

Table 3: **PLAN Sample Test Questions by Score Range**
Conventions of Usage Strand

Score Range	Conventions of Usage	Sample Test Questions	Corresponds to essay on page:
13–15	Solve such basic grammatical problems as how to form the past and past participle of irregular but commonly used verbs and how to form comparative and superlative adjectives	<p><i>If a police car's swirling lights have <u>lighted</u> up the neighborhood, we were the first on the scene.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. was lighting C. has lit *D. lit</p>	N/A
16–19	Solve such grammatical problems as whether to use an adverb or adjective form, how to ensure straightforward subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement, and which preposition to use in simple contexts	<p><i>Congress had passed a law barring segregation on public transportation in the nation's capital, but white conductors frequently disobeyed the law and white passengers often were open hostility.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. were openly hostile. C. had opening hostility. D. had hostile openly.</p>	N/A
20–23	Use idiomatically appropriate prepositions, especially in combination with verbs (e.g., <i>long for</i> , <i>appeal to</i>)	<p><i>The strains <u>of</u> that serenade were so faint I almost had to hold my breath to hear them.</i></p> <p>*A. NO CHANGE B. with C. for D. on</p>	N/A
24–27	Identify the correct past and past participle forms of irregular and infrequently used verbs and form present-perfect verbs by using <i>have</i> rather than <i>of</i>	<p><i>If we were to follow this logic, we could consider George Washington, who served two consecutive terms, our first and second presidents, John Adams our third, Thomas Jefferson our fourth and fifth, and so on, leading all the way up to George H. W. Bush—who <u>would of been</u> our fifty-sixth president.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. would been C. to be *D. would be</p>	68–69
28–32	Correctly use reflexive pronouns, the possessive pronouns <i>its</i> and <i>your</i> , and the relative pronouns <i>who</i> and <i>whom</i>	<p><i>When the attendant came by and latched our safety bar, I was surprised at <u>its</u> flimsiness.</i></p> <p>*A. NO CHANGE B. its' C. it's D. that's</p>	N/A

Table 3: **PLAN Sample Test Questions by Score Range**
Conventions of Punctuation Strand

Score Range	Conventions of Punctuation	Sample Test Questions	Corresponds to essay on page:
13–15	Delete commas that create basic sense problems (e.g., between verb and direct object)	<p><i>As I left, her house that night I felt a little sad, and the feeling returns to me today whenever Halloween rolls around.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. left her house C. left, her house, D. am leaving, her house</p>	N/A
16–19	Delete commas that disturb the sentence flow (e.g., between modifier and modified element)	<p><i>On Inauguration Day, 1989, every newspaper, and television station reported that <u>George Herbert Walker Bush</u> had been sworn in as the forty-first president of the United States.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. newspaper and television C. newspaper, and television, D. newspaper and television—</p>	68–69
20–23	Delete unnecessary commas when an incorrect reading of the sentence suggests a pause that should be punctuated (e.g., between verb and direct object clause)	<p><i>In fact, it <u>belongs</u>, to the largest order of freshwater fishes, the <u>Cypriniformes</u>, which includes minnows, catfish, and carp.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. fact, it belongs C. fact, it, belongs D. fact it belongs,</p>	72–73
24–27	Recognize and delete unnecessary commas based on a careful reading of a complicated sentence (e.g., between the elements of a compound subject or a compound verb joined by <i>and</i>) Use apostrophes to indicate simple possessive nouns	<p><i>Over the years, a stand of beautiful beech trees has grown up out of the islands, <u>wet</u>, fertile soil.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE B. island’s wet, and *C. island’s wet, D. islands wet and</p>	N/A
28–32	Use commas to set off a nonessential/nonrestrictive appositive or clause	<p><i>Sure, the plane was rickety, but if the priest, a <u>veteran flier</u> didn’t mind, then neither did I.</i></p> <p>A. NO CHANGE *B. veteran flier, C. veteran, flier, D. veteran, flier</p>	70–71

THINKING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE PLAN TEST

In our increasingly complex society, students' ability to think critically and make informed decisions is more important than ever. The workplace demands new skills and knowledge and continual learning; information bombards consumers through media and the Internet; familiar assumptions and values often come into question. More than ever before, students in today's classrooms face a future when they will need to adapt quickly to change, to think about issues in rational and creative ways, to cope with ambiguities, and to find means of applying information to new situations.

Classroom teachers are integrally involved in preparing today's students for their futures. Such preparation must include the development of thinking skills such as problem solving, decision making, and inferential and evaluative thinking. These are, in fact, the types of skills and understandings that underlie the test questions on PLAN.

HOW CAN ANALYZING TEST QUESTIONS BUILD THINKING SKILLS?

On pages 26–27, you will find an additional passage and sample test questions. The sample test questions provide a link to a strand, a Standard, and a score range. Each sample test question includes a description of the skills and understandings students must demonstrate in order to determine the best

answer. The descriptions provide a series of strategies students typically might employ as they work through each test question. Possible flawed strategies leading to the choice of one or more incorrect responses also are offered. Analyzing test questions in this way, as test developers do to produce a Test Question Rationale, can provide students with a means of understanding the knowledge and skills embedded in the test questions and an opportunity to explore why an answer choice is correct or incorrect.

Providing students with strategies such as these encourages them to take charge of their thinking and learning. The sample test questions that appear in Table 3 on pages 18–23 can be used to develop additional Test Question Rationales.

“Learning is fundamentally about making and maintaining connections . . . among concepts, ideas, and meanings.”

— American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, June 1998

Making Molas

Off the coast of Panama, on tiny coral islands in the Caribbean Sea, there exists an artistic tradition that fosters works of extraordinary vividness and power. Here the Cuna Indian women of the San Blas Islands turn pieces of cloth into treasured hand-worked design called molas.

Early in life, a Cuna girl is taught by the women of her tribe to make her first mola. Cutting out pieces of red, blue, green, yellow, orange, and black cotton cloth, she forms rectangular layers approximately twenty-four inches by sixteen inches. She then cuts patterns in the various layers and sews them together to achieve original designs. As the underlying colors are revealed, they may take the shapes of animals or plants that she knows, or they may portray the legends of her ancestors.

1 [1] Why is the creation of a mola important to a Cuna woman? [2] In youth, she sews a vibrant cloth panel to make an attractive blouse that will gain the esteem of a suitor. [3] Later, she sews panels to sell. [4] In both cases, her personal art is a fulfilling way of expressing her tribe's customs and her own thoughts.

What determines the value of a mola? Large size and intricate detail increase the price. A small panel usually has ² one image in the center, surrounded by colorful patterns repeated along the edge. A “grandma mola,” however, is a larger, rarer design of detailed abstract figures. These molas, made by older women, are expensive, freely flowing, confident reflections of a lifetime of experience and imagination. They often surpass the values of the marketplace, communicating a vitality of human spirit that cannot be reckoned in terms of profit and loss.

This passage is a description of a traditional craft of the Cuna Indian women. If students read through the passage once before answering the questions, as the directions instruct, they will get a general sense of the essay; such an initial reading should help inform their thinking as they respond to the questions. All the information needed to answer the questions is provided in the passage. During a testing situation, it would be useful for students to raise the sorts of questions they ask themselves in the process of their own writing, such as: How should the essay be organized? How formal or informal should the essay's style be?

Test Question Rationale	
Organization, Unity, and Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rearrange the sentences in a fairly uncomplicated paragraph for the sake of logic ■ 24–27 score range

1. For the sake of unity and coherence, Sentence 3 should be:
- A. where it is now.
 - B. placed after Sentence 1.
 - *C. placed after Sentence 4.
 - D. DELETED.

In both drafting and revising, writers often decide where to insert (or delete) material or how to rearrange it. This question imitates that sort of authorial problem solving, which seems best practiced by writing and becoming familiar with various organizational strategies. To answer this question, a student needs to reread the third paragraph in the essay, in which Sentence 3 can be found. The student should read the third paragraph four times, each time placing Sentence 3 after the sentence indicated by each choice. Thus, a student will learn, by rereading the paragraph with Sentence 3 placed after Sentence 1, as choice B requires, that this option creates an illogical chronology: The time marker “later” in Sentence 3 has no referent in Sentence 1. Reading the paragraph the way choice C requires also creates an illogical ordering: Sentence 4 refers to “both cases” and only one case has so far been described. In addition, in this scheme of sentence ordering, the word “later” has no referent. Deleting Sentence 3 upsets the chronological order of this paragraph as well and provides only one time when the creation of the mola is important to a Cuna woman. In the correct answer, choice A, the reader is provided with a chronological ordering scheme: “In youth, a Cuna woman . . . Later, she . . . In both cases . . .” In order to answer this question correctly, the student must take note of these transitional indicators and use them as clues to the correct order of the paragraph.

Test Question Rationale	
Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Delete obviously synonymous and wordy material in a sentence ■ 16–19 score range

2. *F. NO CHANGE
- G. usually being not very large
 - H. usually not very large in size
 - J. is usually not large and

The second sample question measures the student’s ability to identify and correct redundant material in writing. In order to answer this question correctly, students need to use their editing skills to eliminate the redundancy created by choosing answer choices G, H, and J. Choice G creates a redundancy because it describes the panel, which has already been called “small,” as “usually being not very large.” Choice H creates a redundancy by saying that the small panel is “usually not very large in size.” The structure of choice J is a little different from that of the two answers above it: This choice adds a complete clause to the sentence by using “is” and “and.” Still, it creates repetition by stating that “a small panel is usually not large.” The correct answer, choice F, NO CHANGE, provides clarity and conciseness to the essay.

THE ASSESSMENT-INSTRUCTION LINK

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LINK ASSESSMENT WITH INSTRUCTION?

Assessment provides feedback to the learner and the teacher. It bridges the gap between expectations and reality. Assessment can gauge the learners' readiness to extend their knowledge in a given area, measure knowledge gains, identify needs, and determine the learners' ability to transfer what was learned to a new setting.

When teachers use assessment tools to gather information about their students, then modify instruction accordingly, the assessment process becomes an integral part of teaching and learning. Using assessment to inform instruction can help teachers create a successful learning environment.

Students can use assessment as a tool to help them revise and rethink their work, to help integrate prior knowledge with new learning, and to apply their knowledge to new situations. Connecting assessment to classroom instruction can help both teachers and students take charge of thinking and learning.

As teachers review student performances on various measures, they can reexamine how to help students learn. As Peter Airasian, the author of *Classroom Assessment* says, "Assessment is not an end in itself, but a means to another end, namely,

"Every objective, every lesson plan, every classroom activity, and every assessment method should focus on helping students achieve those [significant] outcomes that will help students both in the classroom and beyond."

— Kay Burke, editor of *Authentic Assessment: A Collection*

good decision making" (p. 19). Linking assessment and instruction prompts both teachers and students to take on new roles and responsibilities. Through reflecting together on their learning, students and teachers can reevaluate their goals and embark on a process of continuous growth.

ARE YOUR STUDENTS DEVELOPING THE NECESSARY SKILLS?

Because PLAN is administered during the tenth grade, it allows for a midpoint review of progress students are making in high school. The PLAN results can be used to provide direction for educational and career planning that will allow for adjustment in students' course work to achieve goals after high school. At this stage in their high school careers, students should be encouraged to explore a range of educational and career options based on their current interests and most recent achievements.

EXPLORE and PLAN are developmentally and conceptually linked to the ACT and thus provide a coherent framework for students and counselors and a consistent skills focus for teachers from Grades 8 through 12.

To facilitate the review of students' progress, PLAN and ACT scores are linked through a common score scale and students receive an estimated ACT Composite score along with their PLAN scores. These scores can be used to evaluate students' readiness for college course work and to provide guidance as they prepare for their transition to college or further training. With an ever-increasing number of high school graduates entering college, it becomes the schools' responsibility to ensure that its graduates have mastered the prerequisite skills necessary for success in entry-level courses.

As students and others review test scores from EXPLORE, PLAN, and the ACT, they should be aware that ACT's data clearly reveal that students' ACT test scores are directly related to preparation for college. Students who take rigorous high school courses, which ACT has defined as core college preparatory courses, achieve much higher test scores than students who do not. ACT has defined core college preparatory course work as four or more years of English, and three or more years each of mathematics, social studies, and natural science.

ACT works with colleges to help them develop guidelines that place students in courses that are appropriate for their level of achievement as measured by the ACT. In doing this work, ACT has gathered course grade and test score data from a large number of first-year students across a wide range of postsecondary institutions. These data provide an overall measure of what it takes to be successful in a standard first-year college course. Data from 98 institutions and over 90,000 students were used to establish the ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores, which are median course placement scores achieved on the ACT that are directly reflective of student success in a college course.

Success is defined as a 50 percent chance that a student will earn a grade of B or better. The courses are the ones most commonly taken by first-year students in the areas of English, mathematics, social studies, and science, namely English Composition, College Algebra, an entry-level College Social Studies/Humanities course, and College Biology. The ACT scores established as the ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores are 18 on the English Test, 22 on the Mathematics Test, 21 on the Reading Test, and 24 on the Science Test. The College Readiness Benchmark Scores were based upon a sample of postsecondary

institutions from across the United States. The data from these institutions were weighted to reflect postsecondary institutions nationally. The Benchmark Scores are median course placement values for these institutions and as such represent a *typical* set of expectations.

College Readiness Benchmark Scores have also been developed for EXPLORE and for PLAN, to indicate a student's probable readiness for college-level work, in the same courses named above, by the time the student graduates from high school. The EXPLORE and PLAN College Readiness Benchmark Scores were developed using records of students who had taken EXPLORE, PLAN, and the ACT (four years of matched data). Using either EXPLORE subject-area scores or PLAN subject-area scores, we estimated the conditional probabilities associated with meeting or exceeding the corresponding ACT Benchmark Score. Thus, each EXPLORE (1–25) or PLAN (1–32) score was associated with an estimated probability of meeting or exceeding the relevant ACT Benchmark Score. We then identified the EXPLORE and PLAN scores, at Grades 8, 9, 10, and 11, that came the closest to a 0.5 probability of meeting or exceeding the ACT Benchmark Score, by subject area. These scores were selected as the EXPLORE and PLAN Benchmark Scores.

All the Benchmark Scores are given in Table 4. Note that, for example, the first row of the table should be read as follows: An eighth-grade student who scores 13, or a ninth-grade student who scores 14, on the EXPLORE English Test has a 50 percent probability of scoring 18 on the ACT English Test; and a tenth-grade student who scores 15, or an eleventh-grade student who scores 17, on the PLAN English Test has a 50 percent probability of scoring 18 on the ACT English Test.

Subject Test	EXPLORE Test Score		PLAN Test Score		ACT Test Score
	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	
English	13	14	15	17	18
Mathematics	17	18	19	21	22
Reading	15	16	17	19	21
Science	20	20	21	23	24

USING ASSESSMENT INFORMATION TO HELP SUPPORT LOW-SCORING STUDENTS

Students who receive a Composite score of 16 or below on PLAN will most likely require additional guidance and support from their teachers and family in order to meet their academic goals, particularly if one of those goals is to attend a four-year college or university.

College admission policies vary widely in their level of selectivity. ACT Composite scores typically required by colleges having varying levels of selectivity are shown in Table 5. This information provides only general guidelines. There is considerable overlap among admission categories, and colleges often make exceptions to their stated admission policies.

Table 5: The Link Between ACT Composite Scores and College Admission Policies

Admission Policy	Typical Class Rank of Admitted Students	Typical ACT Composite Scores of Admitted Students
Highly Selective	Majority of accepted freshmen in top 10% of high school graduating class	25–30
Selective	Majority of accepted freshmen in top 25% of high school graduating class	21–26
Traditional	Majority of accepted freshmen in top 50% of high school graduating class	18–24
Liberal	Some of accepted freshmen from lower half of high school graduating class	17–22
Open	All high school graduates accepted to limit of capacity	16–21

A student's PLAN Composite score is one indicator of the student's readiness for college-level work. For each student's PLAN Composite score, an estimated ACT score range is reported. The estimated ACT Composite score range refers to the score a student would be expected to obtain in the fall of his or her senior year. The estimated fall twelfth-grade score ranges for students who take PLAN in the fall of tenth grade are reported in Table 6.

Table 6 indicates that, for a PLAN Composite score of 13 in fall of tenth grade, the lower limit of the estimated fall twelfth-grade ACT Composite score range is given as 13 and the upper limit is given as 17. That is, an estimated ACT Composite score range of 13 to 17 is reported for students who receive PLAN Composite scores of 13 when tested in the fall of tenth grade.

In interpreting the estimated ACT Composite score ranges, it's important to note that EXPLORE, PLAN, and the ACT are curriculum-based testing programs. This is one reason ACT expects that some students will fall short of or improve upon their estimated ACT score ranges. If students do not maintain good academic work in high school, their actual ACT Composite scores may fall short of their estimated score ranges. The converse is also true; some students who improve their academic performance may earn ACT Composite scores higher than estimated.

As students review their PLAN test scores, they should be encouraged to think about their postsecondary education or training plans. Test scores should be discussed in the context of students' future goals, previous academic preparation, and plans for future high school course work. As educators and parents look over students' content-area test scores, the way students' scores match up with their goals will become clear. For example, a student who wishes to become a journalist will need a solid English background. A high English Test score can be used as evidence that the goal is realistic. A low score (or subscore) suggests the student should consider ways of improving his or her English skills through additional course work and/or added effort in the area.

Table 6: Estimated ACT Composite Score Ranges

PLAN Composite Score	Estimated ACT Composite Score Range	
	Low Score	High Score
1	8	10
2	8	10
3	8	10
4	8	11
5	8	11
6	9	12
7	10	13
8	11	14
9	11	14
10	11	15
11	12	15
12	13	17
13	13	17
14	14	18
15	15	19
16	16	20
17	17	21
18	19	23
19	20	24
20	21	25
21	22	26
22	23	27
23	24	28
24	26	30
25	26	30
26	27	31
27	28	32
28	29	33
29	30	33
30	31	34
31	33	35
32	33	35

“A rigorous high school curriculum is often the strongest predictor of entering college and earning a degree This suggests that for students who plan to go to college, demanding coursework as early as eighth grade will increase their chances for college success. As [high school] course requirements become standard, it is important to ensure that the corresponding course content prepares students for the rigors of college” (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002, p. 17).

In addition to planning for high school course work, taking remedial classes if necessary, and beginning to match career goals to known talents, tenth-grade students who want to attend a four-year college or university should begin educating themselves about such schools. Some students, particularly those whose parents did not attend college, may not have access to information about postsecondary education. “Though many students . . . attending urban schools may have the desire and expectation, they may not have the skills, knowledge, and information they need to enter and complete a postsecondary program. Many . . . do not have the informational resources, personal support networks, continual checkpoints, or structured programs to make college exploration and planning a theme throughout their daily lives. . . . Students need their schools, parents, and others to help them plan for college and their future careers” (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002, p. 4).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A LOW-SCORING STUDENT?

Low-achieving students tend to be those students who score low on standardized tests. Students who slip behind are the likeliest to drop out and least likely to overcome social and personal disadvantages.

According to Judson Hixson, a researcher at the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), students who are at risk should be considered in a new light:

Students are placed “at risk” when they experience a significant mismatch between their circumstances and needs, and the capacity or willingness of the school to accept, accommodate, and respond to them in a manner that supports and enables their maximum social, emotional, and intellectual growth and development.

As the degree of mismatch increases, so does the likelihood that they will fail to either complete their elementary and secondary education, or more importantly, to benefit from it in a manner that ensures they have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be successful in the next stage of their lives—that is, to successfully pursue postsecondary education, training, or meaningful employment and to participate in, and contribute to, the social, economic, and political life of their community and society as a whole.

The focus of our efforts, therefore, should be on enhancing our institutional and professional capacity and responsiveness, rather than categorizing and penalizing students for simply being who they are. (Hixson, 1993, p. 2)

Hixson's views reveal the necessity of looking at all the variables that could affect students' performance, not just focusing on the students themselves.

Low-achieving students may demonstrate some of the following characteristics:

- difficulty with the volume of work to be completed;
- low reading and writing skills;
- low motivation;
- low self-esteem;
- poor study habits;
- lack of concentration;
- reluctance to participate in class or to ask for help with tasks/assignments; and
- test anxiety.

Many of these characteristics are interconnected. For example, a low-scoring student cannot complete the volume of work a successful student can if it takes a much longer time for that low-scoring student to decipher text passages because of low reading skills. There is also the issue of intrinsic motivation: students may have little desire to keep trying if they do not habitually experience success.

Some low-scoring students may not lack motivation or good study habits, but may still be in the process of learning English; still others may have learning disabilities that make it difficult for them to do complex work in one or two content areas.

Again, we must not focus only on the students themselves, but also consider other variables that could affect their academic performance, such as

- job or home responsibilities that take time away from school responsibilities;
- parental attitude toward and involvement in students' school success;
- students' relationships with their peers;
- lack of adequate support and resources; and
- lack of opportunities.

For example, some students who score low on tests are never introduced to a curriculum that challenges them or that addresses their particular needs: "Much of the student stratification within academic courses reflects the social and economic stratification of society. Schools using tracking

systems or other methods that ultimately place low-income and marginal students in lower-level academic courses are not adequately preparing them to plan for postsecondary education, succeed in college, and prepare for lifelong learning" (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002, p. 18).

As Barbara Means and Michael Knapp have suggested, many schools need to reconstruct their curricula, employing instructional strategies that help students to understand how experts think through problems or tasks, to discover multiple ways to solve a problem, to complete complex tasks by receiving support (e.g., cues, modifications), and to engage actively in classroom discussions (1991).

Many individuals and organizations are interested in helping students succeed in the classroom and in the future. For example, the Network for Equity in Student Achievement (NESA), a group of large urban school systems, and the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN), a group of school districts in diverse suburban areas and small cities, are organizations that are dedicated to initiating strategies that will close the achievement gap among groups of students. Many schools and districts have found participation in such consortia to be helpful.

According to Michael Sadowski, editor of the *Harvard Education Letter*, administrators and teachers who are frustrated by persistent achievement gaps within their school districts "have started to look for answers within the walls of their own schools. They're studying school records, disaggregating test score and grade data, interviewing students and teachers, administering questionnaires—essentially becoming researchers—to identify exactly where problems exist and to design solutions" (Sadowski, 2001, p. 1).

A student may get a low score on a standardized test for any of a number of reasons. To reduce the probability of that outcome, the following pages provide information about factors that affect student performance as well as some suggestions about what educators and students can do before students' achievement is assessed on standardized tests like PLAN.

WHAT ARE SOME FACTORS THAT AFFECT STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Many factors affect student achievement. Diane Ravitch, a research professor at New York University, has identified several positive factors in her book *The Schools We Deserve: Reflections on the Educational Crisis of Our Time* (1985, pp. 276 and 294). These factors, which were common to those schools that were considered effective in teaching students, include

- a principal who has a clearly articulated vision for the school, and the leadership skills to empower teachers to work toward that vision;
- a strong, clearly thought-out curriculum in which knowledge gained in one grade is built upon in the next;
- dedicated educators working in their field of expertise;
- school-wide commitment to learning, to becoming a “community of learners”;
- a blend of students from diverse backgrounds;
- “high expectations for all” students; and
- systematic monitoring of student progress through an assessment system.

There are also factors that have a negative impact on student achievement. For example, some students “may not know about, know how, or feel entitled to take academic advantage of certain opportunities, like college preparatory courses, college entrance exams, and extracurricular learning opportunities” (Goodwin, 2000, p. 3).

All students need to be motivated to perform well academically, and they need informed guidance in sorting out their educational/career aspirations. Teachers who challenge their students by providing a curriculum that is rigorous and relevant to their world and needs (Brewer, Rees, & Argys, 1995; Gay, 2000), and who have a degree and certification in the area in which they teach (Ingersoll, 1998) and ample opportunities to collaborate with their peers (McCollum, 2000), are more likely to engender students’ success in school.

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

Using assessment information, such as that provided by the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT tests in ACT’s Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS), can help bring into view factors that may affect—either positively or negatively—student performance. Reviewing and interpreting assessment information can encourage conversations between parents and teachers about what is best for students. Using data is one way of making the assumptions you have about your students and school, or the needs of students, visible.

Collecting assessment information in a systematic way can help teachers in various ways. It can help teachers see more clearly what is happening in their classrooms, provide evidence that the method of teaching they’re using really works, and determine what is most important to do next. As teachers become active teacher-researchers, they can gain a sense of control and efficacy that contributes to their sense of accomplishment about what they do each day.

There are many different types of assessment information that a school or school district can collect. Some types yield quantitative data (performance described in numerical terms), others qualitative data (performance described in nonnumerical terms, such as text, audio, video, or photographs). All types, when properly analyzed, can yield useful insights into student learning. For example, schools and teachers can collect information from

- standardized tests (norm- or criterion-referenced tests);
- performance assessments (such as portfolios, projects, artifacts, presentations);
- peer assessments;
- progress reports (qualitative, quantitative, or both) on student skills and outcomes;
- self-reports, logs, journals; and
- rubrics and rating scales.

Reviewing student learning information in the context of demographic data may also provide insight and information about specific groups of students, like low-scoring students. Schools therefore would benefit by collecting data about

- enrollment, mobility, and housing trends;
- staff and student attendance rates and tardiness rates;
- dropout, retention, and graduation rates;
- gender, race, ethnicity, and health;
- percent of free/reduced lunch and/or public assistance;
- level of language proficiency;
- staff/student ratios;
- number of courses taught by teachers outside their endorsed content area;
- retirement projections and turnover rates; and
- teaching and student awards.

WHAT CAN EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS DO BEFORE STUDENTS TAKE STANDARDIZED TESTS?

Integrate assessment and instruction. Because PLAN is curriculum-based, the most important prerequisite for optimum performance on the test is a sound, comprehensive educational program. This “preparation” begins long before any test date. Judith Langer, the director of the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement, conducted a five-year study that compared the English programs of typical schools to those that get outstanding results. Schools with economically disadvantaged and diverse student populations in California, Florida, New York, and Texas predominated the study. Langer’s study revealed that in higher performing schools “test preparation has been integrated into the class time, as part of the ongoing English language arts learning goals.” This means that teachers discuss the demands of high-stakes tests and how they “relate to district and state standards and expectations as well as to their curriculum” (Langer, 2000, p. 6).

Emphasize core courses. ACT research conducted in urban schools both in 1998 and 1999 shows that urban school students can substantially improve their readiness for college by taking a more demanding sequence of core academic courses in high school. Urban students taking a more rigorous sequence of courses in mathematics and science and finding success in those courses score at or above national averages on the ACT. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, or family income, those students who elect to take four or more years of rigorous English courses and three or more years of rigorous course work in mathematics, science, and social studies earn higher ACT scores and are more successful in college than those who have not taken those courses (ACT & Council of Great City Schools, 1999). Subsequent research has substantiated these findings and confirmed the value of rigor in the core courses (ACT, 2004a; ACT & The Education Trust, 2004).

Teach test-taking strategies. Students may be helped by being taught specific test-taking strategies, such as the following:

- Learn to pace yourself.
- Know the directions and understand the answer sheet.
- Read carefully and thoroughly.
- Answer easier questions first; skip harder questions and return to them later.
- Review answers and check work, if time allows.
- Mark the answer sheet quickly and neatly; avoid erasure marks on the answer sheet.
- Answer every question (you are not penalized for guessing on PLAN).
- Become familiar with test administration procedures.
- Read all the answer choices before you decide which is the best answer.

Students are more likely to perform at their best on a test if they are comfortable with the test format, know appropriate test-taking strategies, and are aware of the test administration procedures. Test preparation activities that help students perform better in the short term will be helpful to those students who have little experience taking standardized tests or who are unfamiliar with the format of PLAN.

WHAT DO THE PLAN ENGLISH TEST RESULTS INDICATE ABOUT LOW-SCORING STUDENTS?

Students who score below 16 on the PLAN English Test are likely to have some or all of the knowledge and skills described in the PLAN English College Readings Standards for the 13–15 range. In fact, they may well have some of the skills listed in the 16–19 range. Low-scoring students may be able to demonstrate skills in a classroom setting that they are not able to demonstrate in a testing situation. Therefore, these students need to become more consistent in demonstrating these skills in a variety of contexts or situations.

The EPAS English College Readiness Standards indicate that students who score below 16 can fairly consistently

- Use conjunctive adverbs or phrases to show time relationships in simple narrative essays (e.g., *then*, *this time*)
- Revise sentences to correct awkward and confusing arrangements of sentence elements
- Revise vague nouns and pronouns that create obvious logic problems
- Use conjunctions or punctuation to join simple clauses
- Revise shifts in verb tense between simple clauses in a sentence or between simple adjoining sentences
- Solve such basic grammatical problems as how to form the past and past participle of irregular but commonly used verbs and how to form comparative and superlative adjectives
- Delete commas that create basic sense problems (e.g., between verb and direct object)

In sum, students who score below 16 on the PLAN English Test are able to make good decisions about basic punctuation and to solve many simple sentence-level writing problems. These students need practice solving sentence-level writing problems of a more sophisticated sort, though. They also need to talk about organizational strategies in writing, about how important it is to choose the transition word that is exactly right for the context, about how to carefully reorder sentences in order to emphasize certain aspects of the material, and about what information might be considered irrelevant to specific texts or portions of texts. Students who score below 16 on the PLAN English Test are, in general, less able to deal with writing issues that ask them to make decisions about large pieces of text. These decision-making skills are necessary to PLAN: on the actual test, sentences are not presented in isolation, as they are in examples we present in this guide. On PLAN, all sentences are part of a larger essay, and students often cannot answer questions correctly without referring to and making decisions about larger pieces of text.

WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY ABOUT THE PROFICIENT WRITER?

A great deal of research in the 1970s and 80s examined what student writers actually *do* as they create their work. Researchers hoped to learn what the average student needs to be taught in order to become proficient at the craft of writing. Among the leaders in these investigations were Emig (1971), Perl (1979), Calkins (1980), Flower and Hayes (1981), and Graves (1983). Emig's research (1971) suggested that creating a finished piece of writing is not a simple, linear process but a recursive one, in which writers move back and forth between stages—for example, drafting, editing, revising, drafting new portions, generating other ideas, and then revising and editing again. This finding shifted teachers' focus from the end product—the finished essay, story, or research paper—to the *process* that proficient writers use as they build their work. Emig identified five stages of the writing process, stages that do not always necessarily proceed in this order:

- Prewriting—generating ideas, thinking about the piece one is planning to work on
- Drafting—writing out a rough copy of the piece
- Revision—literally, this means reseeing, rearranging, reversioning the piece that has been drafted
- Editing—fixing mechanical errors such as spelling or grammatical mistakes
- Publication—the sharing of a finished product

Teaching students how to effectively use this process, and helping each student find his or her own recursive writing strategies, has been emphasized in writing education and research for the past thirty years now. Teachers promote learning about the writing process in a variety of ways. For example, teachers can help students work at their writing through:

- use of writers' workshops where teacher and students comment on student writers' in-process work,
- collaborative writing circles where peers help each other rework drafts, and
- conferences between teacher and student before the student's work is finished and ready for publication.

Besides helping students work through the writing process, many teachers use writing as a way of helping their students learn across content areas (Langer & Applebee, 1987). Through daily informal journal writing—whether that journal writing consists of the student jotting down questions about literature read, taking notes on current events, entering drafts of a homework assignment, or recording experiments in biology class—the student will gain understanding of the subjects he or she is studying. All students, but particularly students who score low on standardized tests, need daily, informal writing practice. Such consistency of practice has been shown to improve students' attitudes toward writing in general. Moreover, combined with careful responses from their teachers, daily informal writing encourages students to use a more sophisticated thinking process during writing (Christenbury, 1998).

But just because a student writer receives instruction in the writing process, just because a student is provided with daily opportunities to record experience in journals, that student's finished piece of writing will not automatically be one most would rate "proficient." What is it, then, that makes the difference between the work of writers whose end product is good enough and writers whose end product is not?

Researchers have recently compared the thought processes of "expert," or more accomplished, writers with those of "novice," or less mature, writers. Bryson and Scardamalia describe the thought process of the expert writer as being one which involves problem solving at a sophisticated level. As expert writers compose, these researchers say, they move between solving problems of content—deciding what to say—and solving problems of rhetoric—deciding how to say it. As these writers work, the content they use for their text is reconfigured and they often see it in a new light. As the content changes, so the form in which the writers present the content changes. Each decision the writers make about which ideas to include in their papers, for example, forces them to make new decisions about where to place those ideas in relation to the material already present. Each decision the writers make about what tone to present their ideas in forces them to make decisions about what material is appropriate to that tone. With this back-and-forth problem-solving process comes a sense of creating something entirely new, which may be the reason so many expert writers—Robert Frost, for example—describe their experience of writing as

being one of discovery (p. 147). The novelist E. M. Forster captures the experience of many expert writers when he recounts the anecdote of an old lady asking, “How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?” (Forster, 1927, p. 101).

In contrast, novice writers do not describe their writing process as being one in which they learn something new. These less mature writers show little evidence of working out a connection between form and content. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) found that novice writers conceive of a writing project as being simply the telling of what they know about the topic, rather than seeing the project as being a way of learning a new aspect of the topic. According to this research, writers who are “knowledge tellers” say that their biggest problem in writing is finding enough material to fill the page-number requirement given them by their teacher. These “knowledge tellers” don’t solve problems of either form or content very often, because the way they conceive of the task of writing bypasses both content-area problems and rhetorical problems (p. 147).

Novice writers’ thinking, then, during draft writing, is more linear than the thinking of expert writers. Novice writers, in these researchers’ findings, look to the teacher to tell them what to write about, and what form to present the information in. In the novice writer’s thinking process, decisions about form and content do not interconnect or influence each other, as they do in the expert writer’s thinking process. Novice writers show little concern about planning, about emphasizing main ideas or using specific or graceful language. They begin writing as soon as they’re given the assignment and decide they’re finished when they’ve filled up enough pages.

It’s important to be aware that these two models of thinking-when-writing are generalizations—both proficient writers and novice writers use many different methods to compose their work. But the research usefully suggests that what novice writers need is to learn how to transform—not merely tell—their knowledge. Some ideas of ways teachers might help student writers develop the skills and the thinking processes that help them transform, not simply tell, in their writing are included in the next pages.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP NOVICE WRITERS WRITE BETTER?

Though, according to 1998 NAEP data, over 80 percent of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students report that their teachers talk to them about their writing and ask them to write more than one draft of a paper at least sometimes, there is some evidence that in some schools low-scoring students are required to perform writing tasks that consist primarily of fill-in-the-blank or short-answer exercises (Britton, 1975; Applebee, 1981; Carbo, 1994) rather than tasks in which writing is used for thinking. In a 1991 chapter called “Teaching Writing to Students at Risk of Academic Failure,” Bryson and Scardamalia (1991) state that

Writing instruction for chronic low achievers typically focuses on techniques for remediating so-called basic skills such as spelling, grammar, and handwriting. A central assumption made by many educators of low-achieving students is that the acquisition of so-called low-level text production skills is a necessary prerequisite to the acquisition of composing skills associated with writing as a powerful tool for personal learning, such as problem solving strategies and rhetorical knowledge. (p. 142)

These researchers suggest that the assumption that students need to spend time on remediation rather than learning the higher-order thinking skills that are a part of the expert writers’ repertoire is a large part of what causes these students to be “low achievers” in writing.

What do these researchers describe as ways to improve the writing of such students? The following list is a combination of suggestions from “Language Arts: A Chapter of the ASCD Curriculum Handbook” (Christenbury, 1998); suggestions from Bryson and Scardamalia’s article “Teaching Writing to Students at Risk for Academic Failure” (1991); and ideas from other education researchers, including Mayher, Lester, & Pradl (1983), Fulwiler (1987), Shaughnessy (1977), Learner (1989), Delpit (1995), and Heath (1983):

- It’s important that students have multiple, daily opportunities to write ungraded work in every class. The more students are asked to write short, informal texts, the more comfortable they become with the act of writing and the more proficient they are apt to become at all kinds of writing. Research indicates that using ungraded journals in science, social studies, or mathematics classes as well as in English classes can help students think about content concepts more clearly and help them become more comfortable using writing as part of the thinking process (Mayher, Lester, & Pradl, 1983; Fulwiler, 1987).
- It’s important to develop writing topics that are appropriate to students’ ages and interests. For teachers, this means learning about students’ lives and working as much as possible to encourage writing assignments that build on students’ strengths (Christenbury, 1998).
- Low-scoring students need opportunities to imitate, practice, appropriate, and modify a wide variety of discourses. Low-achieving students in particular may not have had access to experiences that teach them the style of academic discourse; they may need carefully designed scaffolding to support their efforts to acquire experience with the use of language that characterizes academic literacy (Heath, 1983; Shaughnessy, 1977).
- As well as opportunities to learn a new style of writing and speaking—what we’ve here called academic discourse—students need teachers who respect and build on the strengths of their home language. Teachers need to learn about the writing styles and values of students from cultures other than their own. While they help those students learn to write in “standard English,” teachers must work to identify and eliminate sociocultural biases that constrain traditional school-based definitions of literacy (Bryson & Scardamalia, 1991; Delpit, 1995).
- In their more formal writing experiences, students need some prewriting assistance. They can be given a list, a first sentence, a poem to imitate, or a chart to fill in, to help them think about ways of organizing their writing (Christenbury, 1998).
- In their more formal writing experiences, students also need enough time to write and rewrite their work. They need to be allowed to write drafts in which concern about mechanics is not paramount (Shaughnessy, 1977). They need time to be away from their writing—a day or two—so that they can come back and evaluate it with fresh eyes (Christenbury, 1998).
- Low-achieving students need teachers who “make overt the covert cognitive activities that underlie expert-like composing”; they need modeling and discussion of problem-solving strategies in writing (Bryson & Scardamalia, 1991).
- All students need opportunities to get feedback about their writing-in-process and they need time for revision. With teacher assistance, students can learn how to respond to their peers’ writing, critiquing other students’ work and helping them to revise and improve it. Peer review is helpful for the critic, as well—seeing flaws in others’ work can help a student notice the flaws in his or her own (Christenbury, 1998). Developing a social context for writing through collaborative writing sessions helps everyone become a reader and a writer (Bryson & Scardamalia, 1991).
- Students need opportunities to write in a variety of genres to a variety of audiences. When students write only personal essays, when they write only for the audience of the teacher, their motivation can diminish (Christenbury, 1998).
- Use of computers can encourage low-scoring students to write longer compositions and to revise more. Computers can be used to help students present their writing to audiences other than the teacher—via e-mails to fellow students, news posted on electronic bulletin boards, or class newsletters developed with the help of a word processing program (Lerner, 1989).
- Finally, sentence-combining activities, in which students are instructed to combine simple sentences using conjunctions and punctuation in order to form more complex sentences, have been found to be particularly useful with low-scoring adolescent students (Lerner, 1989).

WHAT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS ARE LOW-SCORING STUDENTS READY TO LEARN?

For students who score below 16 on the PLAN English Test, their target achievement outcomes could be the College Readiness Standards listed in the 16–19 range:

- Identify the basic purpose or role of a specified phrase or sentence
- Delete a clause or sentence because it is obviously irrelevant to the essay
- Select the most logical place to add a sentence in a paragraph
- Delete obviously synonymous and wordy material in a sentence
- Revise expressions that deviate from the style of an essay
- Determine the need for punctuation and conjunctions to avoid awkward-sounding sentence fragments and fused sentences
- Decide the appropriate verb tense and voice by considering the meaning of the entire sentence
- Solve such grammatical problems as whether to use an adverb or adjective form, how to ensure straightforward subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement, and which preposition to use in simple contexts
- Recognize and use the appropriate word in frequently confused pairs such as *there* and *their*, *past* and *passed*, and *led* and *lead*
- Provide appropriate punctuation in straightforward situations (e.g., items in a series)
- Delete commas that disturb the sentence flow (e.g., between modifier and modified element)

By no means should these be seen as limiting or exclusive goals. As stated earlier, it is important to use multiple sources of information to make instructional decisions and to recognize that individual students learn at different rates and in different sequences. What's important is to get students writing texts of varied kinds—whether these are

- expressive, informal texts, such as journal entries;
- imaginative, expository, descriptive, or persuasive texts;
- songs, notes, lab reports, or speeches to be delivered in class;
- imitative poems; or
- formal research reports, responses to literature, and thought-filled essays.

When this kind of varied, regular writing occurs in classrooms, students' ability to create sophisticated pieces of writing will improve. As a result, editing skills like those tested on the PLAN English Test will improve.

WHAT STRATEGIES/MATERIALS CAN TEACHERS USE IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

According to Bryan Goodwin, senior program associate at the Mid-continent Research Education Laboratory (McREL), “it is important to note that improving the performance of disenfranchised students does not mean ignoring other students. Indeed, many of the changes advocated—such as making curricula more rigorous and creating smaller school units—will benefit all students” (Goodwin, 2000, p. 6). Means and Knapp (1991) express a similar view:

A fundamental assumption underlying much of the curriculum in America’s schools is that certain skills are “basic” and must be mastered before students receive instruction on more “advanced” skills, such as reading comprehension, written composition, and mathematical reasoning. . . . Research from cognitive science questions this assumption and leads to a quite different view of children’s learning and appropriate instruction. By discarding assumptions about skill hierarchies and attempting to understand children’s competencies as constructed and evolving both inside and outside of school, researchers are developing models of intervention that start with what children know and provide access to explicit models of thinking in areas that traditionally have been termed “advanced” or “higher order.” (p. 1)

Pages 44–50 provide a teacher-developed activity that could be used in a classroom for all students, not just those who have scored low on a standardized assessment like PLAN. Called “Why Write Letters to the Editor?” the activity asks students to read letters from the “Letters to the Editor” section of a daily newspaper and, once they have, in small collaborative groups, determined the purposes to those letters, write letters to the editor themselves.

HOW IS THE ACTIVITY ORGANIZED?

A template for the instructional activity appears on page 43. Since the instructional activity has multiple components, an explanation of each is provided below.

A The primary *English Strands* are displayed across the top of the page. The strand names “Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus” and “Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy” have been abbreviated to “Topic Development” and “Word Choice,” respectively.

B The *Guiding Principles* section consists of one or more statements about instruction, assessment, thinking skills, student learning, and other educationally relevant topics.

C The *Title* and *Subject Area(s)/Course(s)* information allows you to determine at a glance the primary focus of the activity and whether it might meet the needs of your student population.

D The *Purpose* statement describes knowledge and skills students may have difficulty with and what will be done in the activity to help them acquire that knowledge and skills.

E The *Overview* section provides a brief description of how the knowledge and skills listed in the purpose statement will be taught and suggests an estimated time frame for the entire activity.

F The *Links to College Readiness Standards* section indicates the primary knowledge and skills the activity will focus on. These statements are tied directly to the strands listed at the top of the page.

G The next section, *Description of the Instructional Activity*, is divided into three interrelated parts: Materials/Resources, Introduction, and Suggested Teaching Strategies/Procedures. The section provides suggestions for engaging students in the activity, and gives related topics and tasks. The activity addresses a range of objectives and modes of instruction, but it emphasizes providing students with experiences that focus on reasoning and making connections, use community resources and real-life learning techniques, and encourage students to ask questions—questions leading to analysis, reflection, and further study and to individual construction of meanings and interpretations.

H Valuable *Comments/Tips from Classroom Teachers* are provided for the activity. As the title indicates, this text box includes ideas from current classroom teachers.

I The *Suggestions for Assessment* section offers ideas for documenting and recording student learning. This section describes two types of assessments: Embedded Assessments and Summative Assessments. Embedded Assessments are assessments that inform you as to where your students currently are in the learning process (a formative assessment that is primarily teacher developed and is integral to the instructional process—at times the instruction and assessment are indistinguishable). The second type of assessment is a Summative Assessment (a final assessment of students’ learning), which provides a description of the knowledge and skills students are to have mastered by the end of the activity and the criteria by which they will be assessed.

J The *Links to Ideas for Progress* section provides statements that suggest learning experiences (knowledge and skills to be developed) that are connected to the Suggested Strategies/Activities.

K The *Suggested Strategies/Activities* section provides a brief description of ways to reteach the skills or content previously taught or to extend students’ learning.

The teacher-developed activity that follows provides suggestions, not prescriptions. You are the best judge of what is necessary and relevant for your students. Therefore, we encourage you to review the activity, modifying and using those suggestions that apply, and disregarding those that are not appropriate for your students. As you select, modify, and revise the activity, you can be guided by the statements that appear in the Guiding Principles box at the beginning of the activity.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strand(s):

A

Guiding Principles

-
-
-

B

Suggestions for Assessment

I

Embedded Assessment (name of assessment)—

Embedded Assessment (name of assessment)—

Summative Assessment (name of assessment)—

ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING

Links to Ideas for Progress

J

-
-
-

Suggested Strategies/Activities

K

TITLE

C

Subject Area(s)/Course(s)

Purpose

D

Overview

E

Links to College Readiness Standards

-
-
-

F

Description of the Instructional Activity

Materials/Resources

-
-
-

G

Introduction—

Suggested Teaching Strategies/Procedures—

Comments/Tips from Classroom Teachers:

H

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strand: *Topic Development*

Guiding Principles

- “The central tension is what makes the focus dynamic, active, something worth writing—and reading. There should be forces at work within the focus: a question, a doubt, a conflict, a contradiction.” (Murray, 2001, p. 87)
- “Once you finish a draft, make a point of reflecting a bit on your own exploring, planning, and drafting and of noting your thoughts in your writing log if you are keeping one.” (Lunsford & Connors, 1999, p. 49)

WHY WRITE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR?

Tenth-Grade English

Purpose

Students frequently have difficulty clearly identifying and stating the purpose of a piece of writing. This activity helps students identify the reason a writer wrote a piece; students are then asked to evaluate the success of the writer in achieving his or her purpose.

Overview

Students will read letters from the “Letters to the Editor” section of a local newspaper and, working in small groups, determine the purpose of the letters. Students will then write and edit their own letters to the editor of a local newspaper. The letters will be evaluated in peer group settings and by members of another class before they are sent to a local and/or school newspaper. The editor(s) of the newspaper(s) to which the letters will be sent should be contacted ahead of time and told such letters will be coming; perhaps an editor could even visit the class and explain to students the basis on which they choose those letters that do finally appear in the paper.

This activity allows students to voice real concerns to a real editor. Three or four days should be sufficient to complete the activity.

Links to College Readiness Standards

- Identify the central idea or main topic of a straightforward piece of writing
- Identify the basic purpose or role of a specified phrase or sentence
- Add a sentence to accomplish a fairly straightforward purpose such as illustrating a given statement

Description of the Instructional Activity

Materials/Resources

- Copies of three related letters to the editor of a local newspaper
- A transparency of two letters to the editor that have strong and clear purposes
- Student Worksheet for Composing a Letter to the Editor (pp. 47–48)
- Peer Editing Worksheet (p. 49)
- Overhead projector
- Writing tools (pen, paper)
- Optional Assessment:
 - ✓ Rubric for Letter to the Editor (p. 50)

Introduction—Ask students to brainstorm a list of reasons that would lead an individual to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper. Display a preselected letter using an overhead projector. Model ways of determining what the writer’s purpose was. Display a second preselected letter and ask students to identify the purposes of this second letter themselves.

Suggested Teaching Strategies/Procedures—Select three letters to the editor from the local newspaper. Each of the three letters should deal with the same issue or topic. Make sure the topic is of high interest to the students—for example the military draft, the legality of locker searches, the wisdom of having a health center or day care center housed in a high school. Begin the lesson by prompting some argument on the topic so that students’ motivation to analyze the letters is high.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strand: *Topic Development*

Divide the class into groups of three or four students each, carefully choosing students to ensure a mix of motivated and unmotivated students in each group. Each group should look at one of the three letters. Six or more groups would be ideal, so that several groups would review the same letters.

Have each group read their letter carefully to identify the purpose. Tell the groups they may identify more than one purpose if appropriate. Depending on the length of the letter, give the class 10 to 15 minutes to do this. On the board, create three columns, one for each letter. Ask one student from each group to write on the board the purpose(s) the group identified. This should be followed by a guided class discussion of the purposes listed. The discussion should focus on major similarities across the three letters, but differences should also be addressed.

Once the discussion has concluded, ask each group to underline or highlight key phrases and sentences that support each identified purpose. Again, 10 to 15 minutes should be sufficient time.

Have one student from each group record key phrases and supporting sentences under each purpose statement on the board. Discuss how effective writers carefully choose words and construct sentences that help achieve the purposes. Discuss ways the opening and closing of the letter express the writer's purposes and underline those purposes.

On the second day, lead students in identifying up to ten issues or topics about which they may want to write a letter to the school or local newspaper. These topics should be of high personal interest to the students; for example, a new law that restricts teenage drivers' licenses, the closing of a popular arcade in town, etc.

Give students the rest of the period to research the issue of their choosing. Distribute and explain the Student Worksheet found on pages 47–48. Allow students to work individually or in small groups to gather the types of supporting material described on the worksheet. Later, help them as they write the rough drafts of their letters.

When students are ready to evaluate their letters, distribute the Peer Editing Worksheet (see page 49). Each student should peer edit at least two letters. Before beginning the peer editing process, each writer should complete the Peer Editing Worksheet with respect to his or her own letter as a means of self-evaluation.

Comments/Tips from Classroom Teachers:

Staple all worksheets and rubrics for this unit—the Student Worksheet, the Peer Editing Worksheet, and the Summative Assessment Rubric—together so students are less likely to lose them.

Observe as many of the small working groups as possible, answering any questions students may have. Once students have completed the drafts, have them send those drafts to students in another class for feedback. Read the feedback from this class yourself: it's another way to monitor your class's work on this portion of the assignment. Distribute the responses from the students in the other class and help your students see how to analyze and incorporate relevant suggestions into their new drafts.

Comments/Tips from Classroom Teachers:

Ask students who have particular difficulty with writing or who are particularly unmotivated to create a visual letter before composing a written one. Using video equipment, help small groups of students create 5- to 10-minute presentations geared to persuading the audience of their fellow citizens to take a particular action. Involve the class in a discussion about the difference between the two media, video and written text.

Spend the last day of the activity writing final drafts. Ask for volunteers to read their letters aloud. Direct a class discussion geared to recognizing clarity of purpose and effectiveness of supporting phrases, sentences, and material in the letters.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Topic Development*

Suggestions for Assessment

Embedded Assessment (Drafts, Worksheets, and Self-Evaluation)—Reading and commenting on students' responses on the worksheets, reading drafts of students' letters, and reviewing final versions are all ways to monitor students' progress as they learn how to write strong purpose statements and to support those purposes with strong and persuasive phrases and sentences. The self-evaluation will be a strong indicator that the student has a clear sense of purpose and recognizes strong statements in support of that purpose.

Summative Assessment (Rubric for Letter to the Editor)—The summative assessment (see page 50) has been written in student-friendly language. It has also been designed so students can grade their own work, first, scoring each aspect of the work with a 1, 3, or 5. This gives students time to reflect and to develop their own standards for writing. Students should then provide you with their evaluation so you can prepare an evaluation of each student's work, with comments on ways to improve or use what's been learned.

ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING

Links to Ideas for Progress

- Write short texts, in a variety of genres, illustrating simple organization
- Read writers of various genres and imitate their work
- Regularly write informal responses to literature (fiction and nonfiction) in their journals

Suggested Strategies/Activities

Select a magazine that is written for and marketed to teens. You will need to read two consecutive issues of the magazine in order to find an article from an issue that elicits two or three letters from readers. Apply the same process as was used with the letters to the editor. Students would have to read one of the magazine articles and determine the purpose of the letter in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the reader responses. The same could be done using readers' responses to an advice columnist.

Alternatively, tell students that they will be asked to determine, in future classes, the purposes of texts in other genres and formats, such as in persuasive speeches, informative speeches, or political advertisements. Provide students with three poems, short stories, or editorials written by the same writer. Ask the students to evaluate the three different pieces, looking for connections in purpose and focus.

Whenever students are reading longer works such as novels or plays, ask them to keep a reader response journal. In that journal students can think about the writer's purposes in writing that is not expository, but fictional; students can respond to questions such as, "How does the presentation of these characters at this time add to or detract from the story?" "To what purpose does the writer use this particular language?" "How does this action contribute to the writer's purpose in creating this story?"

Student Worksheet for Composing a Letter to the Editor

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Write a letter to the editor that in its first paragraph clearly states its purpose. The letter must include at least three types of supporting materials and should conclude with a restatement of your opinion.

Examples of supporting material are facts, examples, numerical/statistical data, and expert testimony. Listed below are four types of supporting material. Each type of supporting material includes a list of questions. Use the questions to begin critiquing the supporting material you will include in your letter. When you identify your supporting material, write your source next to each type and include a response to each of its questions.

Types of Supporting Material	Source(s) of the Material
<p>Facts</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can the statement be verified, proven, or measured? 2. Does the statement come from a reliable source? 3. Is the statement recent? 	
<p>Examples</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the example relevant? 2. Will the example be interesting and convincing to the readers of the letter? 	
<p>Numerical/Statistical Data</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How recent and relevant is the data? 2. Can you enliven and clarify the data with a comparison (e.g., to give you an idea of how many 2 million is, 2 million hamburgers would fill up this room)? 	
<p>Expert Testimony</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How recent is the testimony? 2. Is the expert qualified to speak on the issue you've chosen? 3. Is the expert likely to be known and respected by the readers? 	

Student Worksheet for Composing a Letter to the Editor (continued)

Below is a model of one way to open and close a letter to the editor. You have seen other models in the letters to the editor you have reviewed and discussed. This model is simply to help you begin (or to jump-start your thinking about) writing a letter to the editor.

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter because _____. I feel strongly that _____. I want to bring your attention to _____.

Supporting material is needed here.

Once again, I ask you to _____. The importance of _____ cannot be overstated.

Sincerely,

Peer Editing Worksheet

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Use this peer editing worksheet to comment on at least two letters written by your peers. As you go through this editing process, think about what you are learning about writing that you can use in your own work. For instance, do you see phrases you have used in your own work? Do they persuade you? Or might they be made sharper, more supportive of the writer's purpose?

Write your name, the name of your peer, the topic, and the purpose of the letter on the lines below. In the boxes, write three phrases that you believe support the purpose of your peer's letter, and provide an explanation for each.

Student Editor: _____

Student Writer: _____

Topic of Letter: _____

Purpose of Letter: _____

List phrases/sentences you believe best support the writer's purpose:	Explain why you think this phrase/sentence best supports the writer's purpose statement:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Summative Assessment—Rubric for Letter to the Editor

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Both student and teacher score the student's final draft of the letter to the editor. In the score column, place the number—5, 3, or 1—that you think you/the student has earned. In the comments column, provide evidence or reasons for this score. After student and teacher have both scored the letter and made comments, a meeting to discuss any disagreements may be of value.

Criteria	5	3	1	Student score	Comments	Teacher score	Comments
Purpose	I have taken a clear stand on the issue; the purpose of my letter is stated in the first paragraph.	I have taken a stand, but I did not clearly state the purpose in the first paragraph.	I did not take a stand on the issue; I may have presented some information, but it is not clear how I stand on the issue.				
Supporting Material	I have chosen three or more types of supporting material to include in my letter; I've provided information describing where I found the material.	I have included one or two kinds of supporting material.	I have found no supporting evidence to include in my letter.				
Organization	My letter has an organization that is logical, uses transitions to connect ideas, and concludes with a strong restatement of my opinion.	My letter has an organization that is logical and uses transitions many times; but the conclusion does not include a restatement of my opinion, or the restatement is weak or unclear.	My letter's organization is weak; connections between ideas are confusing; my letter does not include a conclusion.				
Audience	I effectively addressed the needs and characteristics of the audience.	I adequately addressed the needs and characteristics of the audience.	I did not address the needs and characteristics of the audience.				
Word Choice	My word choice is powerful, specific, accurate, and descriptive.	My word choice is acceptable; language is routine.	My word choice is dull, uninspired, or even inappropriate.				

Adapted from Berlin Middle School, Worcester County, MD. Retrieved August 16, 2005, from intercom.net/local/school/sdms/mspap/wkidpers.html

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR PLAN ENGLISH

WHY ARE ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDED?

The set of instructional activities that begins on page 52 was developed to illustrate the link between classroom-based activities and the skills and understandings embedded in the PLAN English Test questions. The activities are provided as examples of how classroom instruction and assessment, linked with an emphasis on reasoning, can help students practice skills and understandings they will need in the classroom and in their lives beyond the classroom. It is these skills and understandings that are represented on the PLAN English Test.

A variety of thought-provoking activities, such as small- and large-group discussions, analyses of written materials, and both independent and collaborative activities, are included to help students develop and refine their skills in many types of situations.

The instructional activities that follow have a similar organizational structure as the one in the previous section. *Like the other activity, these activities were not developed to be a ready-to-use set of instructional strategies.* ACT's main purpose is to illustrate how the skills and understandings embedded in the PLAN English Test questions can be incorporated into classroom activities.

For the purpose of this part of the guide, we have tried to paint a picture of the ways in which the activities could work in the classroom. We left room for you to envision how the activities might best work for you and your students. We recognize that as you determine how best to serve your students, you take into consideration your teaching style as well as the academic needs of your students; state, district, and school standards; and available curricular materials.

The instructional activities are not intended to drill students in skills measured by the PLAN English Test. It is never desirable for test scores or test content to become the sole focus of classroom instruction. However, considered with information from a variety of other sources, the results of standardized tests can help you identify areas of strength and weakness. The activities that follow are examples of sound educational practices and imaginative, integrated learning experiences. As part of a carefully designed instructional program, these activities may result in improved performance on the PLAN English Test—not because they show how to drill students in specific, isolated skills but because they encourage thinking and integrated learning. These activities can help because they encourage the kind of thinking processes and strategies the PLAN English Test requires.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Sentence Structure and Formation; Conventions of Usage*

Guiding Principles

- “Because language is so closely related to thought, studying our language patterns, our grammar, can give us insight into our own ways of thinking.” (Lunsford & Connors, 1999, p. 137)
- “Feedback given to learners should be ongoing and supportive.” (South Carolina State Department of Education, 1996)

BEING LANGUAGE DETECTIVES

College Readiness Standards

- Solve such grammatical problems as whether to use an adverb or adjective form, how to ensure straightforward subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement, and which preposition to use in simple contexts
- Decide the appropriate verb tense and voice by considering the meaning of the entire sentence
- Revise shifts in verb tense between simple clauses in a sentence or between simple adjoining sentences
- Use conjunctions or punctuation to join simple clauses

Description of the Instructional Activity

The teacher could ask students to become “language detectives,” listening to and recording in their journals particularly unusual, poetic, humorous, or effective expressions overheard in conversations at the store, at home, in school, on the street. Students’ recorded expressions should be accurate, not revised for grammatical correctness. After students collect expressions for some weeks, the teacher could initiate discussion, asking students to volunteer their favorite expressions.

The teacher could ask: What assumptions do you have about the speaker, based on his or her expressions? How would this statement be different if it were written down rather than spoken? If it were said in a different context/to a different listener/by a speaker of a different gender/by a speaker from a different country? This could lead into a discussion of how the definition of “correct” changes depending on context.

The teacher could read a monologue from a text (from Saul Bellow’s novel *Herzog*, for example) and note ways in which the monologue differs from standard written English. Students could be asked to rewrite the monologue in standard written English. What is lost? What is gained?

In small groups, students could write the culminating activity of this unit—dialogue between themselves and a character in one of the novels the class is reading. The character chosen should be one whose behavior is far removed from the student’s—a character whose behavior is confusing or off-putting to the student writer. The purpose of this activity is to reenter the text in an imaginative way, but also to see if students’ time as language detectives has increased their understanding of language differences.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Sentence Structure and Formation; Conventions of Usage*

Suggestions for Assessment

Assessing Revisions—Using many of the examples of informal expressions students have gathered, the teacher could write one or two paragraphs containing usage and grammar that is not standard English and ask students to rewrite it in standard English.

Ideas for Progress

- Revise sentences to correct inconsistencies in verb tense and pronoun person
- Learn to recognize when commas are overused

Suggested Strategies/Activities

If students seem to be having problems with basic grammatical or punctuation issues, the teacher could conduct a mini-lesson helping students to see and correct these errors. For example, if there are many errors around subject-verb agreement in student essays, the teacher could, following Mina Shaughnessy in *Errors and Expectations*, provide students with examples of such errors, collected from other students' papers. ("It is believed that there is other forms of life" for example.) The students who have been having difficulty with this particular construction could work on correcting sentences such as the one above. Over time, these students could become the class resident experts on all grammatical problems surrounding subject-verb agreement. They could be charged with finding solutions to other students' subject-verb agreement problems whenever they come up.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Word Choice; Sentence Structure and Formation; Conventions of Punctuation*

Guiding Principles

- “Short, simple sentences may be memorable, but they don’t tell us very much. Ordinarily, we need more complex sentences to convey meaning.” (Lunsford & Connors, 1999, p. 704)
- “Learners must be given opportunities to look back, to reflect, to debrief, to abstract from their experiences what they have felt and thought and learned.” (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993, p. 7)

BUILDING STRONG SENTENCES

College Readiness Standards

- Correct vague and wordy or clumsy and confusing writing containing sophisticated language
- Deal with multiple punctuation problems (e.g., compound sentences containing unnecessary commas and phrases that may or may not be parenthetical)
- Use sentence-combining techniques, effectively avoiding problematic comma splices, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments, especially in sentences containing compound subjects or verbs
- Revise vague nouns and pronouns that create obvious logic problems
- Use conjunctions or punctuation to join simple clauses

Description of the Instructional Activity

The teacher could write a very short sentence from a piece of student writing on the board (e.g., Joan walked home.). The teacher could model various ways of making this short sentence more vivid. She could discuss using more dynamic verbs—shuffled, sauntered—depending on the mood the writer wanted to convey. She could read to students examples of periodic sentences and talk about when and why a writer might decide to use such a sentence. She could read students complex sentences from articles in the *New Yorker* magazine, for example, and ask students to imitate those sentences in their writing (Gray, 2000, p. 41). The class could then try to make the original short sentence as long, vivid, and detailed as possible without making it awkward or unclear. (Alternatively, each student could expand the sentence independently at his or her desk, later volunteering to read the final product[s] for discussion.)

The teacher could point out the kinds of grammatical structures students add to the base clause: appositives (Joan, *the girl with red hair*,); relative clauses (Joan, the girl with red hair *who had finished her homework*,); adverbial and adjectival constructions (Joan, the girl with red hair who had finished her homework, walked home *from the park on Wednesday*,). The class could discuss the punctuation problems that occur as they lengthen their sentences. All the students could assess their long sentences together, explaining why they thought each sentence was effective and graceful or unwieldy and confusing (Christensen, 1978; Koch & Brazil, 1978).

At another time, the teacher could write a very long sentence on the board and ask students to see how many unnecessary words can be omitted.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Word Choice; Sentence Structure and Formation; Conventions of Punctuation*

Suggestions for Assessment

Multiple-Choice Assessment—The teacher could distribute an essay in which incorrect punctuation and poorly constructed sentences that produce run-ons, fragments, or wordy and awkward sentences have been underlined. Individually, students could choose the best way to correct each punctuation and sentence structure problem from a short list of correct and incorrect choices.

Primary-Focus Assessment—In reading students' drafts of their next short essay assignment, the teacher could focus primarily on determining whether, as a result of the above instructional activity, students' sentences show evidence of increased complexity, variety, and vividness. The teacher could delay focusing on other aspects of students' writing until later drafts have been completed.

Ideas for Progress

- Use sentence-combining techniques to create more sophisticated sentences; check to avoid fragments, comma splices, and run-ons
- Revise writing to correct faulty coordination and subordination of clauses
- Write many simply organized short texts of various genres
- Learn to recognize when commas are overused
- Vary sentence length by combining simple sentences

Suggested Strategies/Activities

The teacher could ask students to fold an unlined piece of paper as if it were a business letter. Then, on the left-hand side of the paper, each student could write on a topic of interest for two to three minutes. Students could then highlight the thoughts and sentences they think could be combined into better sentences. In the second column of the folded paper, students could complete two or three of the improved combined sentences. Students may read these improved sentences aloud, if they wish.

Students could then hand their folded paper to another student in the class. This student could highlight in another color sentences that they think could also be combined effectively. They can ask questions about sentences that have already been formed (pointing out comma splices or run-ons, perhaps). The first student could then use the paper to make a few more great sentences using the combinations another student has suggested. The entire activity can take as little as ten minutes.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Topic Development; Organization, Unity, and Coherence*

Guiding Principles

- “The form of what we say contains and therefore helps communicate our meaning.” (Murray, 2001, p. 111)
- “Teachers can help learners see and understand their own process of writing, discover what helps them to get unstuck, and find ideas.” (Kutz & Roskelly, 1991, p. 182)

ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE

College Readiness Standards

- Identify the focus of a simple essay, applying that knowledge to add a sentence that sharpens that focus or to determine if an essay has met a specified goal
- Delete material primarily because it disturbs the flow and development of the paragraph
- Rearrange the sentences in a fairly uncomplicated paragraph for the sake of logic

Description of the Instructional Activity

When students are at the beginning of a major writing project, the teacher could present a variety of traditional ways of organizing writing—classification, comparison, analysis, problem-solution, definition, etc. The teacher could provide visual representations of each organizing mode as well as examples of texts written in each way. Students could be encouraged to think about using these forms as they engage in prewriting activities and as they are writing first drafts. The teacher should make sure that students know they can modify each paradigm or visual organizing tool to suit their own purposes (Lindemann, 1982).

After students have begun writing their first drafts, the teacher could briefly show students his own draft of the writing project. He could show students the ways he’s been revising and organizing his draft, explaining to students the reasons for rearranging sentences or paragraphs while showing them cut up and rearranged pages. The teacher could distribute copies of the most recent draft and encourage students to work in small groups to reorganize the paper themselves.

After students have written a few drafts of their essays, the teacher could send the most current versions to willing community members, preservice English teachers, or active writers for comment. The readers could e-mail the students or write them letters in response to their essays. Students could reply to the readers, explaining their intentions in the essays, asking which of various rewrites seem best, and thanking the reader for his or her response.

After students have rewritten their drafts, the students could be organized into groups of three each. Each group could look at their peers’ essays, helping each other make decisions about transition words or phrases they’ve used. Students can also talk together about more general organizational issues: Should the introductory paragraph be moved to a different portion of the essay? Should the whole middle portion of the essay be reconceived? Can the essay be expanded to continue after what is now the conclusion?

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Topic Development; Organization, Unity, and Coherence*

Suggestions for Assessment

Rubric-Based Assessment—At the beginning of this writing project, the teacher could collaborate with students to develop the rubric that will be used to score their writing. After the entire project is completed, the teacher could explain in brief conferences why a student's work received the score it did. The student could be encouraged to rewrite the work for an improved grade sometime later in the semester. Over the course of the year, the class as a whole could take responsibility for designing their own rubrics for writing projects.

Ideas for Progress

- Recognize and experiment with more sophisticated organizational structures (e.g., comparison-contrast, cause-effect)
- Develop awareness of ways that form and content can be changed as the audience for the writing changes

Suggested Strategies/Activities

Students could write journal entries about this project. They could describe the process they used as they organized, revised, and thought out their essays. They could describe why this method of thinking and organizing worked or didn't work, and what they might do differently next time. The teacher could model such metacognitive writing to students first, if necessary.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Topic Development; Word Choice; Conventions of Punctuation*

Guiding Principles

- “Teachers can help learners tolerate the uncertainty and confusion of writing-in-progress, hold off premature formatting and editing, and let their writing find its own form.” (Kutz & Roskelly, 1991, p. 179)
- “One of the biggest differences between the successful writer and the unsuccessful one is that the successful writer says one thing. One idea dominates.” (Murray, 2001, p. 89)

Again, talking out loud, the teacher could select one of the four topics and say as much as possible about it, focusing on recalling specific, sensory details. Students could ask questions about the topic. Then students could, in pairs, think out loud and share ideas about one of their own topics.

The students and the teacher could then write rough drafts based on the topics they chose. The teacher could read her draft, pointing out unclear language, sentences that might be off the topic, and other aspects of the essay she plans to revise. She could talk about ways she thinks about her audience when she writes, narrowing the topic to match their interests. She could talk to students about the danger of having their readers think, “So what?” when they finish reading their piece. The teacher could ask students to consider the following questions while they write: What will a reader learn or think, based on this paper? Why should a reader care about the experience or topic described here? Over the next few days students could do the same, reading portions of their drafts to their partners and getting feedback (NCTE, 1995). If many student papers share the same punctuation problems, the teacher can provide a mini-lesson on that particular issue.

TACKLING TOPICS

College Readiness Standards

- Apply an awareness of the focus and purpose of a fairly involved essay to determine the rhetorical effect and suitability of an existing phrase or sentence, or to determine the need to delete plausible but irrelevant material
- Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence and tone of the essay
- Provide appropriate punctuation in straightforward situations (e.g., items in a series)
- Revise sentences to correct awkward and confusing arrangements of sentence elements

Description of the Instructional Activity

In front of the class, the teacher could model the process of generating writing topics, talking out loud, writing on a chalkboard or overhead projector four possible writing topics. The teacher could share with students details about each of the topics. Then students could pair up, think of four topics themselves, and discuss their topics briefly with their partners. Throughout the year, the teacher could encourage the class to keep in their journals running lists of possible subjects for essays—ideas gathered from other classes, from activities, or from conversation.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Topic Development; Word Choice; Conventions of Punctuation*

Suggestions for Assessment

Essay-Revision Assessment—The teacher could find (or write herself) an essay draft that contains a poorly developed topic, sentences that are irrelevant to the main focus of the essay, and few details to support the writer's points. The teacher could distribute photocopies of the essay and have the students jointly workshop the essay, with one student recording the suggested revisions.

Tape-Recorded Assessment—Instead of writing marginal notes on the first full rough draft of the essays students started above, the teacher could ask students to turn in tape cassettes with their drafts. Then the teacher could record comments and suggested revisions to the paper, perhaps reading parts of the paper into the tape recorder. This method of response might be more personal and less judgmental than the traditional marginal notes. This method could help the teacher quickly give students in-depth feedback to use as they work on their final drafts (Anson, 1997).

Ideas for Progress

- Write short texts in a variety of genres, illustrating simple organization
- Learn how meaning can be expressed through connotation
- Avoid clutter and use vivid verbs and specific nouns
- Develop awareness of ways that form and content can be changed as the audience for the writing changes

Suggested Strategies/Activities

Small groups of students could be asked to create advertisements and slogans for fictional sodas, soups, or snacks. First, students should survey groups within the school to learn more about their target audience's needs and interests. Students might do this by creating a survey instrument.

The design and slogan of the ad should be based on the data the survey provides. Student groups could also study professional ads to learn how to create their own ads and to determine how professional advertisers appeal to their target audiences. The teacher could then lead a discussion about ways these kinds of concerns might come into the essays they write.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Topic Development; Word Choice*

Guiding Principles

- “Students should have many opportunities to experience the interaction of reading, speaking, listening, and writing as reasoning and communicating acts.” (NCTE, 1988–89)
- “The writer is always on the lookout for specific details. The more specific the detail, the more it resonates . . . leading writer—and later, reader—to meaning.” (Murray, 2001, p. 35)

DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

College Readiness Standards

- Add a sentence to accomplish a subtle rhetorical purpose such as to emphasize, to add supporting detail, or to express meaning through connotation
- Revise a phrase that is redundant in terms of the meaning and logic of the entire sentence
- Delete a clause or sentence because it is obviously irrelevant to the essay
- Identify the focus of a simple essay, applying that knowledge to add a sentence that sharpens that focus or to determine if an essay has met a specified goal
- Revise sentences to correct awkward and confusing arrangements of sentence elements

Description of the Instructional Activity

The teacher could tell the students that their assignment over the next weeks is to write a descriptive report of one of the rooms of their high school building in order to familiarize incoming freshman with it. Students are to assume that the junior high students have never been in the school before, and to focus their descriptions on what they observe with their senses—what does each student reporter see, hear, feel, smell, taste in this room? The teacher could read a report that models specific, sensory description. She could also perhaps ask students to brainstorm with her, thinking up ways to describe the computer lab using fresh language and provocative metaphors.

The teacher could then have students brainstorm a collection of clichéd phrases or expressions (e.g., sun-kissed flowers, tired but happy, cool as a cucumber). The teacher could hand out Kenneth Patchen’s poem “Moon, Sun, Sleep, Birds, Live” (found in Nims’s poetry anthology *Western Wind*) as an example of a work filled with fresh, sensory words. Students could compare the two lists.

Then students could go in small groups to the room of their choice in the high school—the gym, the central office, the band room. Students could make notes that are as detailed and sensory-specific as possible. Over the next few days and with teacher feedback, students could write rough drafts of their reports.

Students could pair up to review each other’s drafts, asking questions like: Can I really see/smell/hear the place my partner describes? Which phrases/expressions best help me see the place? To how many senses did my partner appeal? Does any of the description seem unimportant to the essay as a whole? Is any of the description vague or wordy? What is left out of the description? Are any clichés or dead expressions used in the report? Given this feedback, students could rewrite their drafts. The teacher could then bind the finished reports and send them, with an explanatory cover letter, to a class of eighth graders, who could send back their reactions to the essays, perhaps including a rubric they have created to judge the essays.

Linking Instruction and Assessment

Strands: *Topic Development; Word Choice*

Suggestions for Assessment

Positive-Feedback Assessment—The first time he reads a rough draft of a paper, the teacher could use a highlighter to mark the phrases or expressions that jump out as the most fresh and descriptive. This simple positive response could help guide students as they work on their next drafts.

Group-Created-Rubric Assessment—The teacher and students could use the chalkboard to keep a running list of criteria, a kind of rubric for all writing, that the students and the teacher could add to and check their work against as they write and rewrite new pieces.

Ideas for Progress

- Revise writing to make it more concise and precise
- Revise writing to edit out empty words (e.g., *really*, *very*, *big*, *kind of*)

Suggested Strategies/Activities

Before sending their descriptive essays out to a group of eighth graders, students could look over the use of verbs in their essay. How many verbs do students use in their essays? Can they replace common verbs with stronger, more evocative ones? The teacher could ask students to write a one-paragraph description of a familiar object—their desks, for example. Students could use metaphors or similes to describe the object, but the force of the piece should come primarily from strong verbs and nouns.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

ACT developed this guide to show the link between the PLAN English Test results and daily classroom work. The guide serves as a resource for teachers, curriculum coordinators, and counselors by explaining what the College Readiness Standards say about students' academic progress.

The guide explains how the test questions on the PLAN English Test are related to the College Readiness Standards and describes what kinds of reasoning skills are measured. The sample instructional activities and classroom assessments suggest some approaches to take to help students develop and apply their reasoning skills.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

ACT recognizes that teachers are the essential link between instruction and assessment. We are committed to providing you with assistance as you continue your efforts to provide quality instruction.

ACT is always looking for ways to improve its services. We welcome your comments and questions. Please send them to:

College Readiness Standards Information Services
Elementary and Secondary School Programs (32)
ACT
P.O. Box 168
Iowa City, IA 52243-0168

**“A mind, stretched to a new idea,
never goes back to its original
dimensions.”**

— Oliver Wendell Holmes

WHAT OTHER ACT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE?

In addition to the College Readiness Standards Information Services, ACT offers many products and services that support school counselors, students and their parents, and others. Here are some of these additional resources:

ACT's Website—www.act.org contains a host of information and resources for parents, teachers, and others. Students can visit www.planstudent.org, which is designed to aid students as they prepare for their next level of learning.

The ACT—a guidance, placement, and admissions program that helps students prepare for the transition to postsecondary education while providing a measure of high school outcomes for college-bound students.

EXPLORE—an eighth- and ninth-grade assessment program designed to stimulate career explorations and facilitate high school planning.

WorkKeys®—a system linking workplace skill areas to instructional support and specific requirements of occupations.

ACT Online Prep™—an online test preparation program that provides students with real ACT tests and an interactive learning experience.

The Real ACT Prep Guide—the official print guide to the ACT, containing three practice ACTs.

DISCOVER®—a computer-based career planning system that helps users assess their interests, abilities, experiences, and values, and provides instant results for use in investigating educational and occupational options.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is divided into four sections. The first section lists the sources used in describing the PLAN Program, the College Readiness Standards for the PLAN English Test, and ACT's philosophy regarding educational testing. The second section, which lists the sources used to develop the instructional activities and assessments, provides suggestions for further reading in the areas of thinking and reasoning, learning theory, and best practice. The third section lists diverse literary works suggested by classroom teachers that could be used in conjunction with the instructional activities on pages 52–61. The fourth section provides a list of resources suggested by classroom teachers.

(Please note that in 1996 the corporate name "The American College Testing Program" was changed to "ACT.")

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Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Passage corresponding to sample test questions found on pages 18, 21, 22, and 23

Passage A

Counting Presidents and Presidencies

On Inauguration Day, 1989, every newspaper, and television station reported that George Herbert Walker Bush had been sworn in as the forty-first president of the United States. Every newspaper and television station was wrong. Only forty men had served as president, and Mr. Bush was the fortieth. His presidency, however, was indeed our nation's forty-first.

The source of this confusion is Grover Cleveland, who was elected both in 1884 and in 1892, making Cleveland the only person to serve nonconsecutive terms in the White House. Ever since Cleveland's second term, some people have been enumerating presidents as if Cleveland were two people, our twenty-second and twenty-fourth presidents. Counting Cleveland twice makes George H. W. Bush our forty-first president. If we were to follow this logic, we could consider George Washington, who served two consecutive terms, our first and second presidents, John Adams our third, Thomas Jefferson our fourth and fifth, and so on, leading all the way up to George H. W. Bush—who would of been our fifty-sixth president. Schoolchildren everywhere would struggle to learn that Polk, not Lincoln, was our sixteenth president. Franklin Roosevelt would be our forty-first, -second, -third, and -fourth presidents, not our thirty-second.

A better way of reckoning would be to distinguish between the number of presidencies to those of presidents.

- A1. A.** NO CHANGE
B. newspaper and television
C. newspaper, and television,
D. newspaper and television—

- A2. A.** NO CHANGE
B. would been
C. to be
D. would be

- A3. A.** NO CHANGE
B. and the number of
C. of that of
D. of those and

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

If we count presidencies, beginning with Washington's, every time the office changes hands, the total returns to forty-one. Newspapers, to be accurate, would have to report that George H. W. Bush was sworn in as America's fortieth president, beginning the nation's forty-first presidency—accurate, but cumbersome.

The most logical system would be to number our presidents simply by counting the people who have served in that office. Granted, this approach would involve some minor revisions to the history books. A4 This way, Cleveland would definitely become our twenty-second president, George H. W. Bush our fortieth, and accuracy would reign above the fruited plain.

- A4.** Which of the following sentences, if inserted here, would best promote the argument of the essay?
- A.** Logic is worth a few revisions, though.
 - B.** Look, for example, at how easily some presidential candidates win.
 - C.** It is difficult, in any case, to remember all the presidents in order.
 - D.** We should remember the work of historians is difficult.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Passage corresponding to sample test questions found on pages 19, 20, 21, and 23

Passage B

Nassau Flight

There were two ways to get from Nassau to Harbor Island. One way was to hop the mail boat and spend twelve hours squeezed among sacks of letters. The other way was to take a Bahamasair plane. The mail boat sounded romantic, but I wanted comfort. So one morning I caught a bus to the Nassau airport and bought a ticket to Harbor Island.

Later that day, twenty of us stood on the runway waiting for our plane. I spent the time talking to a priest, who told me he had served in the Bahamas for twenty years. During that time, he said, he'd flown Bahamasair many times. As we talked, a plane taxied toward us, its red-and-white fuselage gleaming in the sun. The copilot climbed down and announced that because our group was so large, some of us would have to wait for a second plane. The priest and I both decided to wait.

When our plane arrived a few minutes later, though, I began to regret my decision. The plane's engine rattled, ^{B1} its fuselage shuddered, and its paint was faded and peeling. The pilot jumped to the runway, stowed our luggage, and herded us aboard. Uneasy but resigned, I staggered to the rear and fell into a seat beside the priest.

He and I initiated further discourse and, as we talked, I ^{B2}

B1. A. NO CHANGE

- B.** besides,
- C.** therefore,
- D.** for instance,

B2. A. NO CHANGE

- B.** started talking again
- C.** resumed verbal commerce
- D.** started chewing the fat again

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

began to feel better. Sure, the plane was rickety, but if the priest, a veteran flier didn't mind, then neither did I. As we ^{B3}sped toward takeoff, the priest suddenly opened a Bible, hunched over it, and began praying. He murmured the words steadily and didn't stop until our plane had finished climbing. Then, finally, leaning back and closing his eyes, he relaxes. That was when I relaxed too.

^{B4}The flight was smooth, but I decided not to press my luck. I shortened my stay on Harbor Island and took the mail boat back to Nassau.

- B3. A.** NO CHANGE
B. veteran flier,
C. veteran, flier,
D. veteran, flier

- B4. A.** NO CHANGE
B. he's relaxed.
C. he relaxed.
D. he begins to relax.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Passage corresponding to sample test question found on page 23

Passage C

The Truth About the Electric Eel

Although the electric eel swims, looks, and in many ways acts like a snake, it's really a fish. In fact, it belongs, to the largest order of freshwater fishes, the Cypriniformes, which includes minnows, catfish, and carp. A muddy greenish brown in color and known to reach lengths of eight to nine feet, an electric eel can grow to be as thick around as a man's thigh. The electric eel swims—forward, backward, and even sideways—by the motions of its long belly fin. Usually, however, it is an exceptionally sluggish animal. Partly this is because it has weak gills and must surface every ten minutes or so for air.

The electric eel was discovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the explorer Alexander von Humboldt. Studying flora and fauna near the headwaters of the Orinoco River, he one day stepped on an electric eel and got the shock of his life. It has since been determined that the electric eel lives exclusively in the Amazon and Orinoco rivers.

The electric eel generates its power from an organ made up of batterylike columns that run three-quarters of the eel's length. The electrical charge apparently is strongest when the eel's head and its tail are contacting the victim at opposite sides of the victim's body. Its charge can shock an alligator, and—for reasons not always clear, but probably having to do with an eel's size and health—it

- C1. A. NO CHANGE
B. fact, it belongs
C. fact, it, belongs
D. fact it belongs,

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Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

sometimes produces enough voltage to kill a horse.

Typically, the electric eel uses its electricity to stun victims, frighten enemies, and navigate along muddy river bottoms. Even baby electric eels—born in the autumn in groups of 50 to 500—only an inch long can develop enough of an electrical charge to make your finger tingle.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Passage corresponding to sample test questions found on pages 18 and 19

Passage D

The Joys of Summer Swimming

[1]

When most people think of going swimming, they think of the ocean or clear, blue lakes or swimming pools with clean water. Instead of those refreshing images, I think of the ditch behind our farmhouse where I discovered the joys of summer swimming.

[2]

As a child I lived on a farm in southern New Mexico, where farmers rely on irrigation to water their crops. Everywhere along the edges of the farms, there are ditches that carry water from the Rio Grande to the thirsty fields. It was in one of those ditches that I learned to swim.

[3]

Of course, the water in the ditch wasn't at all clean; it was anything but pure. The water, brown and muddy, was positively offensive to the eye. But when I was seven I didn't care about what it looked like. Our ditch was the best playground on earth. My brother and I played in that water all summer long to escape from the desert heat, and we didn't even mind sharing it with insects and frogs. Chasing tadpoles was part of the fun, and the fact that the water smelled as bad as it looked didn't bother us at all.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

[4]

D1 The only place to swim was the public swimming pool. The water there was blue, pretty, and crystal clear, but swimming just wasn't the same. There were too many people, there weren't any tadpoles to chase, and the smell of chlorine made me sick. Worst of all, I had to wear a real swimming suit since cutoffs weren't allowed.

[5]

Now, when I take my own kids to the local pool, with its clean, blue water, I don't find it appealing. **D2**

D1. Given that all are accurate, which of the following sentences, if added here, would most effectively advance the narrative from the description of playing in the ditch in Paragraph 3 to the narrator's reaction to the swimming pool in Paragraph 4?

- A. Living in the city has its disadvantages.
- B. When I was eleven we moved into the city.
- C. I wish I could be that young again.
- D. I wish we still lived on the farm.

D2. The writer would like to conclude the essay by linking its ending to its beginning. Which of the following sentences most effectively refers to the narrator's memories presented in Paragraph 1?

- A. I guess that's because I'm no longer an eleven-year-old.
- B. When I think of great summer swimming, I can only think of that muddy ditch behind our farmhouse.
- C. When I go swimming, I go in those clean pools, however, because everyone else wants to go there.
- D. I find them hot and crowded and too sterile for my taste.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Passage corresponding to sample test question found on page 18

Passage E

Bees Dancing

Beekeepers long suspected that the scout bee—a variety of worker bee—had some way of communicating food location to the rest of the hive, but it was the Austrian Karl von Frisch who finally established just how that communicating is done.

Von Frisch—whose pioneering study, *The Dancing Bees*, was published in 1959—discovered that scout bees report food location and abundance by dancing.

The two main dances the bee performs are the round dance, if the food source happens to be within 10 meters of the hive, and the tail-wagging dance, if the food source is located more than 100 meters away. If the food is between 10 and 100 meters from the hive, Austrian honeybees perform the tail-wagging dance while Italian bees do something called the sickle dance.

Most of the bees' dances have the sun as a direction. Performed on the vertical wall of the hive with the understanding that straight up is toward the sun, their dancing usually reflects what angle from the sun the bee must fly to find the food. A bee indicates the distance from the hive of that food source by the appropriate dance, and the abundance of the source by the intensity of its performance. The dancing bee even hands out samples that identify the food type.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

As soon as the worker bees understand the message, they eat enough honey to fuel their flight and leave the hive. Von Frisch found that bees will arrive at the identified food source within five minutes of scout bee's return and explanatory dance. It's amazing that such a complicated message can be conveyed in so little time by a creature whose brain is no larger than a grass seed.

Item E1 asks about Passage E as a whole.

- E1.** By remarking that a creature with a brain “no larger than a grass seed” can accomplish what a scout bee does, the writer intended that we should share her sense of:
- A.** astonishment and delight.
 - B.** propriety and humor.
 - C.** annoyance and reservation.
 - D.** enthusiasm and relaxation.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Passage corresponding to sample test question found on page 19

Passage F

Dream Theory

[1]

Throughout history, humans have considered dreams with wonder, terror and delight. In some mythologies, dreams were believed to foretell marvels and catastrophes or to release the soul from the body so that it could wander through the universe.

[2]

[1] In modern times, dreams became the object of scientific research. [2] In ancient times, the dreams of sorcerers and kings prompted expeditions, marriages, and wars. **F1** [3] For example, in the early twentieth century, psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung speculated that dreams were the gateway from the subconscious mind. [4] Freud believed that they represented wishes forbidden in ordinary waking life and provided a safety valve to prevent mental breakdown. [5] The two pioneers analyzed the links between the unconscious mind and religious and artistic visions.

[3]

More recently, Harvard researchers Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley offered a theory that seemed to take the mystery out of dreams. Called the activation-synthesis hypothesis, it states that dreams do not originate in the spiritual, the magical, or even the psychological.

[4]

Instead, they argued that, although dreams are colored by attitudes and life experiences of the dreamer, their

F1. For the sake of coherence, the preceding sentence should be:

- A. where it is now.
- B. placed after the first sentence in Paragraph 1.
- C. placed after what is presently the third sentence in Paragraph 2.
- D. placed at the end of Paragraph 2.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

source is physical. They are simply the higher brain's attempts to make sense of random electrical impulses sent to it by the lower brain stem during sleep.

[5]

The theory of Hobson and McCarley could well be true. Yet how colorless their theory appears when compared to the dream experience itself. At night, in a dark room with our eyes closed, we enter a realm in which time and physical laws seem suspended. In dreams, each of us is a storyteller, each a magician able to travel vast distances in the span of a breath, speak with people long dead, fly. When we move into this shifting landscape, we are enchanted. So, faced with the power of imagination, science will probably never completely strip dreams of their mystery.

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Passage corresponding to sample test question found on page 20

Passage G

Potter's Wheel

The adobe walls of the pottery workshop emitted a cool stillness that contrasted sharply with the heat of the afternoon's red sun. Handwoven tapestries adorned the walls with a multicolored elegance. Cora greeted me warmly when I arrived for my lesson.

Earlier, she had prepared the clay. Now she was ready to throw a slab of it on the potter's wheel, center it, and shape it into a beehive. Her foot set the wheel in motion. After opening the center of the clay with her thumbs, her fingers formed it into a low, thick-walled shape. She raised the wall into a cylinder by exerting pressure from both inside and outside with her hands. A few strokes from her small knife removed the excess clay from the cylinder.

Entranced by the whirling motion of the wheel, I watched with awe as the clay was transformed into an earthenware vase by Cora's artistry. When she was finally satisfied with its delicate shape, she removed the vase from the wheel with a wire rack.

Then she pointed to a shelf lined with glass jars and told me to choose the glaze. I knew that the glaze would waterproof the vase and minimize problems with germs and odors. But the glaze also had an almost magical property that would lend the drab clay surface a shimmering quality. Without hesitation, I chose a cobalt blue shade, which reminded me of the color of the evening sky. I studied Cora as she applied the glaze to the vase with even strokes. She placed the vase next to other pieces that would be fired in the kiln.

- G1. A.** NO CHANGE
B. this
C. the vase
D. it

Appendix

Passages Corresponding to Sample Test Questions

Later, the afternoon dust scattered as the well-worn wheels of an ancient tour bus squeaked to a stop in front of the studio. A small group of tourists entered the workshop, reminding me that it was time to go. Filled with eagerness, I anticipated the next lesson, when I would be the one to control the potter's wheel.