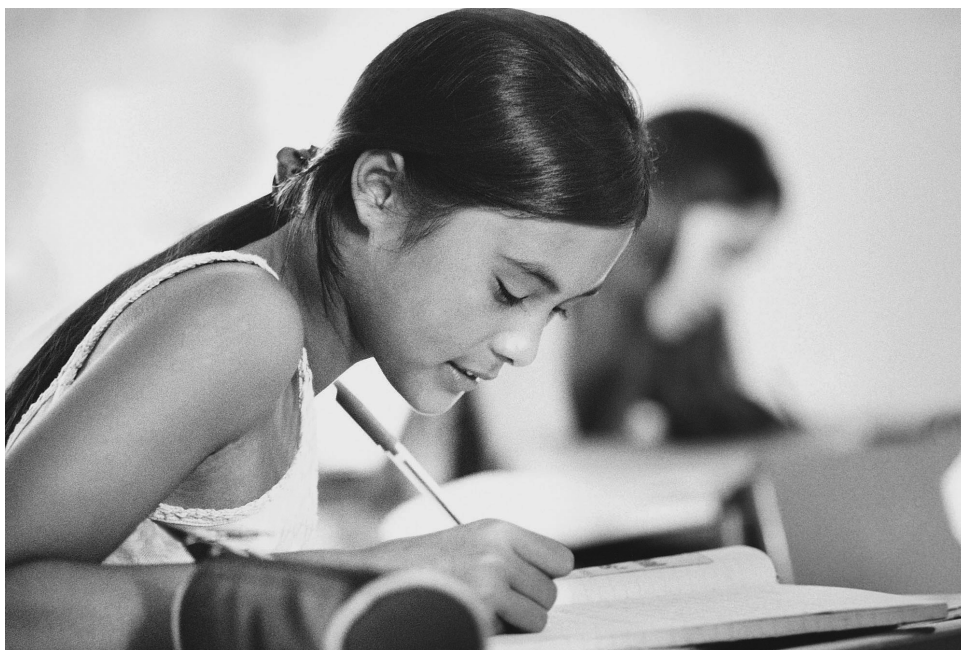




The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

Modified Reading Item and Scoring Sampler



**2010–2011
Grade 6**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| General Description of Scoring Guidelines for Reading | 2 |
| Reading Reporting Categories | 3 |
| Description of Sample Items | 3 |
| Passage 1 and Multiple-Choice Items | 4 |
| First Open-Ended Item | 14 |
| Item-Specific Scoring Guideline | 15 |
| Open-Ended Item Responses | 16 |
| Passage 2 and Multiple-Choice Items | 22 |
| Passage 3 and Multiple-Choice Items | 31 |
| Second Open-Ended Item | 42 |
| Item-Specific Scoring Guideline | 43 |
| Open-Ended Item Responses | 44 |
| Acknowledgements | 50 |

READING

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

The Department of Education provides districts and schools with tools to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned to the state assessment system. These tools include assessment anchor documents, assessment handbooks, and content-based item and scoring samplers. This 2010–2011 Modified Reading Item and Scoring Sampler is a useful tool for Pennsylvania educators in the preparation of local instructional programs and the statewide Pennsylvania System of School Assessment Modified test (PSSA-M).

Description of the PSSA Modified Assessment

The PSSA-M is a statewide assessment based on modified achievement standards for students with disabilities. The assessment is intended for students with disabilities functioning above the lowest 1% of the population, but not at a level that allows them to access the general PSSA assessment.

The content curriculum standards are the same for the PSSA-M as they are for the general PSSA assessment. However, modified items may be used to measure the content standards in the PSSA-M. Modifications, such as reduced text, easier vocabulary, simplified tasks, and the addition of helpful hints, create items that are more accessible but still in line with the content standards. The PSSA-M reflects the same emphasis and patterns as the general PSSA assessment, while utilizing a simpler style and format. The PSSA-M also contains fewer items than the general PSSA assessment. These modifications are designed to allow students with disabilities to demonstrate proficiency on the assessment.

What Is Included

The 2010–2011 Modified Reading Item and Scoring Samplers contain modified reading passages, multiple-choice items, and open-ended items that have been written to align to the Assessment Anchor Content Standards (Assessment Anchors). They provide an idea of the types of items that will appear on the operational Spring 2011 PSSA-M. Each item has been through a rigorous review process to ensure alignment with the Assessment Anchors.

Purpose and Uses

The items in this sampler may be used as examples for creating assessment items at the classroom level, and they may also be copied and used as part of a local instructional program.* Classroom teachers may find it beneficial to have students respond to the open-ended items in this sampler. Educators can then use the sampler as a guide to score the responses either independently or together with colleagues within a school or district.

Item Format and Scoring Guidelines

The multiple-choice items have four answer choices. Each correct response to a multiple-choice item is worth one point.

Each open-ended item is designed to take about ten minutes to complete. During an official testing administration, students are given additional time as necessary to complete the test items. Each open-ended item in reading is scored using an item-specific scoring guideline based on a 0–3 point scale. In this sampler, every item-specific scoring guideline is combined with examples of student responses representing each score point to form a practical item-specific scoring guide.

The sampler also includes the General Description of Scoring Guidelines for Reading used to develop the item-specific guidelines and guides. This General Description of Scoring Guidelines should be used if any additional item-specific scoring guidelines are created for use within local instructional programs.*

* The permission to copy and/or use these materials does not extend to commercial purposes.

READING

Item Alignment

All PSSA-M items are aligned to statements and specifications included in the Assessment Anchor Content Standards documents. The reading content included in the PSSA-M reading multiple-choice items will align with the Assessment Anchors as defined by the Eligible Content statements.

The reading content included in the PSSA-M reading open-ended items will align with content included in Eligible Content statements. The process skills included in the performance demands of the PSSA-M reading open-ended items will align with specifications included in the Assessment Anchor statements, the Descriptor statements, and/or the Eligible Content statements. In other words, the verbs or action statements used in the open-ended questions or stems can come from the Eligible Content, Descriptor, or Assessment Anchor.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SCORING GUIDELINES FOR READING

3 Points

- The response provides a complete answer to the task (e.g., a statement that offers a correct answer as well as text-based support).
- The response provides specific, appropriate, and accurate details (e.g., naming, describing, explaining, or comparing) or examples.

2 Points

- The response provides a partial answer to the task (e.g., indicates some awareness of the task and at least one text-based detail).
- The response attempts to provide sufficient, appropriate details (e.g., naming, describing, explaining, or comparing) or examples; may contain minor inaccuracies.

1 Point

- The response provides an incomplete answer to the task (e.g., indicating either a misunderstanding of the task or no text-based details).
- The response provides insufficient or inappropriate details or examples that have a major effect on accuracy.
- The response consists entirely of relevant copied text.

0 Points

- The response provides insufficient material for scoring.
- The response is inaccurate in all aspects.

Categories within zero reported separately:

BLK (blank).....No response or written refusal to respond or too brief to determine response

OT.....Off task/topic

LOE.....Response in a language other than English

IL.....Illegible

READING

READING REPORTING CATEGORIES

Reading scores are reported in two categories:

- A** – Comprehension and Reading Skills
- B** – Interpretation and Analysis of Fictional and Nonfictional Text

Examples of multiple-choice and open-ended items assessing these categories are included in this sampler.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE ITEMS

The modified reading multiple-choice items begin on the next page. Each item is preceded by the Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content coding. The majority of answer options are followed by a brief analysis or rationale. The correct answer is indicated by an asterisk (*).

Two passages each have an open-ended item that follows the multiple-choice items. Each of these open-ended items is displayed with an item-specific scoring guideline and examples of responses with scores and annotations.

Each item in this sampler has been modified from an existing item in the 2008–2009 PSSA Reading Item and Scoring Sampler. The text box below each modified item and rationale provides the sequence number for the source item and a description that explains how the item was modified. Some examples of modifications include simplified or reduced text, extra spacing, reduced steps or tasks, simplified graphics, the addition of helpful hints, enlarged font sizes, and the use of bold-faced text and underlining. The passages have been segmented, and the specific items associated with each segment have been grouped together.

The 2008–2009 PSSA Reading Item and Scoring Sampler can be found on the PDE website at www.education.state.pa.us. In the left-hand column, select “Programs,” “Programs O–R,” “Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA),” and then “Resource Materials.” Scroll down to find the appropriate sampler.

READING

PASSAGE 1

- Read the story “Surfing Iowa.”
- The story is divided into two sections. Read each section of the story carefully.
- Then answer the questions that follow.
- Then go on to the next section of the story.

Surfing Iowa

by Karen DelleCava

My best friend Randy and I have been surfing ever since we could lift surfboards. From then on, we would only come out of the water to eat and sleep. To tease me, Mom used to check behind my ears and ask, “Jeff, are you growing gills?” As long as I kept up my grades, though, Mom and Dad were cool about it.

Then, one night after dinner, out of nowhere, Dad said, “There’s no easy way to say this, Jeff.” He talked for a few minutes about work and new opportunities. Then he said it. *Relocate*. The word played over and over in my head like a bad song that I couldn’t shake out.

“No way. When?”

“End of June.”

“To *where*?” I couldn’t remember from a minute before.

“Iowa.”

I checked my globe. I knew it. Landlocked. Not one speck of blue anywhere near Iowa. I slumped on the floor, spinning the globe with my big toe. *This can’t be happening*, I thought. *What about Randy*? My stomach felt worse than if I’d swallowed a gallon of salt water.

READING

After I spent some serious time moping around, it hit me. The weeks ahead were like an ice pop melting in the sun. I had to move to Iowa — nothing would change that. But I had been trying to make the ice pop last by watching it drip all over my hand. I decided to slurp it down and enjoy all of it.

So Randy and I hit the surf faster than newly hatched sea turtles. I grabbed every wave I could. Older, more experienced surfers wanted the choice waves for themselves, but I stayed in there with them.

One gigantic wave in particular had my name on it. I paddled hard, timing it perfectly.

Swoosh!

Water churned under my board and fizzed around my ankles. I was up, riding the crest of a frothy wave. I leaned. Another wave chased me. My feet pressed against the waxy surface, steering smoothly to shore.

Randy nodded approvingly and said, "Right out of *SurferKid* magazine."

"Thanks. I'm stocking up. No surfing in Idaho."

"I thought you said Iowa."

"Same difference." I looked out at the ocean. "I wish I could take the waves with me."

"You can."

I grinned, unsure of what he meant.

"Surfing's in here," Randy said, tapping his chest.

"Maybe." I wasn't convinced.

READING

A.1.2.2

1 Read the sentences from the story.

I checked my globe. I knew it. Landlocked. Not one speck of blue anywhere near Iowa.

What does the word landlocked mean?

- ☐ far from oceans *
- ☐ without any winds
- ☐ close to mountains
- ☐ surrounded by trees

The student is asked to determine from context that the word “landlocked” means “far from oceans.” Since the sentence following the underlined word says, “Not one speck of blue anywhere near Iowa,” and since Jeff has been discussing surfing in the ocean, it is clear that option A is the correct response. Options B, C, and D include plausible but incorrect definitions of the term.

Modified from Item 2, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The text in the stem has been simplified, and the quotation marks in the excerpt have been removed to reduce processing. The answer options have been revised using parallel constructions for clarity.

READING

B.2.1.2

2 A simile uses *like* or *as* to compare two things that are very different. Which sentence from the story contains a simile?

- ☐ As long as I kept up my grades, though, Mom and Dad were cool about it.
- ☐ The weeks ahead were like an ice pop melting in the sun. *
- ☐ Water churned under my board and fizzed around my ankles.
- ☐ My feet pressed against the waxy surface, steering smoothly to shore.

The student is asked to choose the sentence that is a simile. Option B, "The weeks ahead were like an ice pop melting in the sun," compares the weeks ahead to an ice pop melting in the sun, using the term "like," so it is the correct response. Options A, C, and D include sentences from the story that do not contain any similes.

Modified from Item 6, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: A hint with a definition for "simile" has been provided at the beginning of the stem for greater accessibility. The answer options have been resequenced in their order of appearance in the story, and the quotation marks have been removed from the option excerpts to reduce processing.

READING

Read the next section of the story.

Sixth grade ended, and moving day came as sure as sunburn on bare shoulders. I tried to convince Randy not to come over. I was afraid it might be too sad. Luckily for me, he wouldn't listen.

"So, what are *you* doing today?" I asked as we finished packing.

"Cleaning out the garage. Want to help?"

I laughed and said, "I wish." There was an awkward pause. Saying good-bye to your best friend isn't easy. "I'll come back to visit as soon as I can. Or you can come to . . ." I bit my lip; it was too hard to say.

"Don't worry. We'll keep in touch, I promise," Randy said. "I never had a pen pal before."

"Pen pal? Ever hear of e-mail?"

As we were laughing, my dad motioned to me. It was time to go.

I waved good-bye until Randy was a speck, then he disappeared. I stared out the car window on my way to Iowa.

Iowa was flatter and drier than I'd imagined. Day after day for that first week, I'd flop onto my bed, holding a shell to my ear. I'd breathe in the saltiness from the center and wonder what Randy was doing.

One day, a voice from outside shouted, "Grab your board!"

If I didn't know better, I'd have run outside expecting to see Randy waving me toward the ocean. I looked out the window. Three boys were skateboarding. I watched for a minute, then dropped back onto my bed. I thumbed through the latest issue of *SurferKid*.

READING

Then, the next day, Dad came into my room holding a long cardboard box. "It's from Randy."

"Thanks," I said as I tore it open. "My skateboard! I must've left it in his garage. That's all we ever did before we started surfing." Taped to the board was a picture of the two of us on our skateboards. The note said, "Find your waves. Miss ya. Randy."

I dug my helmet and pads out of a box in the garage. I stepped on my skateboard, balancing easily. I leaned back on one foot, tipping up the other end. I twisted from the waist. Piece of cake. I twisted hard. A three-sixty! Almost. The board shot out from under me. *Bam!* Wipeout.

"Guess I'm a little rusty," I said to my dad, who was watching me and smiling.

I practiced all afternoon, even as dark clouds began to fill the sky. Before long, I was gliding, almost floating on the board. It was a feeling I thought I'd left in California, a feeling Randy knew I had inside.

I noticed that a skateboarder I'd seen the other day was watching me. I waved. He waved back.

Suddenly, gusts of wind rocked the only shade tree around. When I closed my eyes, it sounded like a curling wave. Rain dumped down. I pumped my foot, and a rooster tail sprayed off my back wheels. The wind pushed me. Surfing Iowa, I sliced through the puddles leading to my house.

READING

B.1.1.1

3 Which sentence **best** describes the setting at the end of the story?

- ☐ I watched for a minute, then dropped back onto my bed.
- ☐ I dug my helmet and pads out of a box in the garage.
- ☐ Before long, I was gliding, almost floating on the board.
- ☐ Suddenly, gusts of wind rocked the only shade tree around. *

The student is asked to choose the sentence that best describes the setting. The correct response, option D, references both the wind and a shade tree, which are both details of the setting. The other options include sentences from the story, but none of these options include clear details of the setting.

Modified from Item 3, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The text for the question in the stem has been simplified for clarity. The answer options have been resequenced in their order of appearance in the story, and the quotation marks have been removed from the option excerpts to reduce processing.

READING

Be sure to use the whole story to answer questions 4–7 and not just the last section of the story.

A.1.4.1

4 What would be the **best** new title for the story?

- ☐ Learning to Skate
- ☐ Dad's Moving Day
- ☐ The Waves Inside *
- ☐ Jeff Loses a Friend

The student is asked to determine what the best new title for the story would be. The story is mostly about Jeff discovering that the joy he feels while surfing comes from inside of himself, so option C is the correct response. Options A, B, and D reference details from the story, but none of these options capture what the story is mainly about.

Modified from Item 1, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The text for the question in the stem has been simplified for clarity. The quotation marks have been removed from the answer options to reduce processing.

READING

A.1.6.1

5 Why did the author write the story?

- ☐ to explain how to learn to surf and skateboard
- ☐ to tell what it feels like to surf and skateboard
- ☐ to explain that skateboarding is more fun than surfing
- ☐ to tell about a surfer who rediscovers skateboarding *

The student is asked to determine the reason the author wrote the story. Since the story is about Jeff, a boy who loves to surf but who rediscovers his love of skateboarding, option D is the correct response. Options A, B, and C include plausible reasons for writing that relate to the story, but none of these options are correct.

Modified from Item 4, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The question in the stem has been simplified and changed to a closed question for greater clarity, and the answer options have been simplified to reduce processing.

READING

B.1.1.1

6 The resolution of the story happens when the problem is solved. When does the resolution take place?

- ☐ when Jeff skateboards to his new house *
- ☐ when Jeff finds out he is moving to Iowa
- ☐ when Jeff is able to ride the gigantic wave
- ☐ when Jeff watches until Randy seems to disappear

The student is asked to determine when the resolution of the story occurs. Jeff's problem of missing the waves and the oceans is solved when he realizes that he can get the same feeling he had when surfing by skateboarding. He realizes that he still loves skateboarding when he is skating toward his house, so option A is the correct response. Options B, C, and D include plausible events from the story, but none of these options describe when the problem is solved.

Modified from Item 5, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: A definition hint has been added to the beginning of the stem to provide additional guidance. The question in the stem has been simplified and closed to provide clarity. All of the answer options have been resequenced, and two of the options have been simplified to reduce processing.

READING

FIRST OPEN-ENDED ITEM

B.1.1.1

- 7 The theme of the story is “Find ways to be happy wherever you are.”
Give **three** examples from the story that show this theme.

| |
|--|
| <p>Example 1: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p>Example 2: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p>Example 3: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |

Modified from Item 7, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The theme of the story has been provided in the stem to give more direction for the task, and three bold-faced example labels have been added to the response box to provide additional guidance and clarity.

READING

ITEM SPECIFIC SCORING GUIDELINE

Item #7

This item will be reported under Category B, Interpretation and Analysis of Fictional and Nonfictional Text.

Assessment Anchor:

B.1 Understand components within and between texts.

Specific Eligible Content addressed by this item:

B.1.1.1 Identify, interpret, compare, describe, and/or analyze components of fiction and literary nonfiction.

Theme:

Identify, interpret, compare, describe, and/or analyze the theme of fiction or literary nonfiction.

Scoring Guide:

| Score | In response to this item the student— |
|--------------|---|
| 3 | demonstrates complete knowledge of understanding theme giving three examples from the story that show the theme “Find ways to be happy wherever you are.” |
| 2 | demonstrates partial knowledge of understanding theme giving two examples from the story that show the theme “Find ways to be happy wherever you are.” |
| 1 | demonstrates incomplete knowledge of understanding theme giving one example from the story that show the theme “Find ways to be happy wherever you are.” |
| 0 | has given a response that provides insufficient material for scoring or is inaccurate in all respects. |
| Non-scorable | BLK (blank)... No response or written refusal to respond or too brief to determine response OT Off task/topic LOE..... Response in a language other than English IL..... Illegible |

Example—Top Scoring Response (3 Points):

| Examples |
|--|
| Jeff and Randy agree that they will email each other so they could stay friends. Randy tells Jeff he can take the waves with him to Iowa because the waves are inside him. Randy sends Jeff the skateboard he left in Randy’s garage, a picture of the two of them skateboarding together, and a note telling Jeff to find his waves. Jeff makes friends when he skateboards in Iowa. Jeff realizes that he gets the same feeling skateboarding in Iowa that he had when he was surfing in California. |

READING

OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 3 points

- 7 The theme of the story is "Find ways to be happy wherever you are." Give **three** examples from the story that show this theme.

| | |
|------------|---|
| Example 1: | They said they would email each other after Jeff moved. |
| | |
| | |
| Example 2: | Randy tells Jeff that he can find the waves in Iowa because the waves are inside him. |
| | |
| | |
| Example 3: | Jeff practiced skateboarding until he got that same feeling he had when he was surfing. |
| | |
| | |

The student has given a complete answer to the task by giving three examples from the story that show the theme "Find ways to be happy wherever you are" ("They said they would email each other after Jeff moved," "Randy tells Jeff that he can find the waves in Iowa because the waves are inside him," and "he got that same feeling he had when he was surfing").

READING

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 2 points

- 7 The theme of the story is "Find ways to be happy wherever you are." Give **three** examples from the story that show this theme.

| | |
|------------|--|
| Example 1: | Jeff was happy surfing in California. "He grabbed every wave he could." |
| Example 2: | Jeff forgot how to skateboard. |
| Example 3: | He waved at the skateboarder watching him. |

The student has given a partial answer to the task by giving one example from the story that shows the theme "Find ways to be happy wherever you are" ("He grabbed every wave he could") and one example that implies the theme ("he waved at the skateboarder watching him").

READING

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 2 points

- 7 The theme of the story is “Find ways to be happy wherever you are.” Give **three** examples from the story that show this theme.

Example 1:

Jeff listened to seashells.

Example 2:

Jeff practised skateboarding.

Example 3:

Jeff thought he saw Randy.

The student has given a partial answer to the task by giving two examples from the story that show the theme “Find ways to be happy wherever you are” (“Jeff listened to seashells” and “Jeff practised skateboarding”).

READING

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 1 point

- 7 The theme of the story is "Find ways to be happy wherever you are." Give **three** examples from the story that show this theme.

| | |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Example 1: | JEFF WAVED AT BOARDERS. |
| | |
| | |
| Example 2: | HE FOUND A PENPAL |
| | |
| | |
| Example 3: | HE GOT MAIL. |
| | |
| | |

The student has given an incomplete answer to the task by giving one example from the story that implies the theme "Find ways to be happy wherever you are" ("Jeff waved at boarders").

READING

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 1 point

- 7 The theme of the story is "Find ways to be happy wherever you are." Give **three** examples from the story that show this theme.

Example 1:

Jeff was floating on
his board.

Example 2:

He moved away.

Example 3:

He got a pitcher.

The student has given an incomplete answer to the task by giving one example from the story that shows the theme "Find ways to be happy wherever you are" ("Jeff was floating on his board").

READING

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 0

- 7 The theme of the story is "Find ways to be happy wherever you are." Give **three** examples from the story that show this theme.

| | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Example 1: | <u>He surfs</u> |
| | |
| | |
| Example 2: | <u>He saw waves</u> |
| | |
| | |
| Example 3: | <u>He has a glob.</u> |
| | |
| | |

The student's response is irrelevant to the task.

READING

PASSAGE 2

- Read the passage “Earl the Elk’s Excellent Adventure.”
- The story is divided into two sections. Read each section of the story carefully.
- Then answer the questions that follow.
- Then go on to the next section of the story.

Earl the Elk’s Excellent Adventure

by George Everett

Elk like to wander, but Earl had gone too far.

Between 1987 and 1990, he walked about 1,800 miles, from the Sweetgrass Hills of Montana to Independence, Missouri. His journey is the longest on record for any elk.

Earl was born in the Sweetgrass Hills, where he grew into a healthy young bull. Wildlife workers there knew him as Elk 964. Now he is famous because of his journey. News reporters call him Earl. People in Missouri call him Montana. Some people just call him Big Guy.

Nobody knows why Earl would leave a place that is so well-suited for an elk. But he did.

Usually, male elk live in their mothers’ herds until they are big enough to protect themselves from predators such as mountain lions and bears. When they leave, bull elk have been known to move as far as 120 miles away from the area where they were born. But Earl was different.

Why did Earl walk so far? Gary Olson is a wildlife biologist who studies elk for the state of Montana. “Earl was at an age when young bulls set off to stake out their own territory,” Olson says. “He may have just walked farther than other young bulls.” Olson thinks Earl might have followed the Milk River north into Canada, then south into Montana again, all the way to the Missouri River. The Missouri led him southeast to Independence.

READING

A.2.4.1

8 According to the passage, why did Earl leave the Sweetgrass Hills?

- ☐ to search for food
- ☐ to find other elk
- ☐ to look for adventure
- ☐ to find his own territory *

The student is asked to recall from the passage why Earl left Sweetgrass Hills. It is explained in the passage that young bulls about Earl's age leave their home to find a territory of their own, so option D is correct. Options A, B, and C include plausible reasons, but are not supported by the passage.

Modified from Item 24, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: A brief introduction phrase has been added to the stem for direction, and the answer options have been resequenced and simplified to reduce processing.

READING

Read the next section of the passage.

A Strange Sight

In 1990, Jim Pyland, a wildlife scientist for the state of Missouri, started getting phone calls about a strange mammal wearing a collar and wandering around Independence. Most people in Missouri are not used to seeing elk. Those who saw Earl did not know what to call him at first. Some of them thought he was an antelope. Some called him a horse. Others guessed he was a moose or a big deer.

Then someone recorded Earl on videotape. Wildlife experts could see that the animal was an elk, which made it even more puzzling. In Missouri, the last known native elk had been seen in 1840. Where had this elk come from?

During his journey, Earl must have seen things he had never seen in the hills where he grew up. He found fields and trees, of course. But there were also houses, yards, shopping centers, and highways. During his six months in Independence, he was often spotted during backyard barbecues and parties.

Once, when Earl was startled by a car horn, he ran through several yards, leaping over fences, and dropped in on a backyard garage sale. Everyone forgot what they were going to buy and watched Earl. They followed him to a patch of tall grass, where he began to eat.

Another time, Earl was hurt in a traffic accident. On a highway, he was hit first by one car and then by another. Earl limped into the woods. Many people thought he had died. Two months later, he showed up again. By the awkward way he walked, people knew he had been injured. But he went back to eating in his usual places.

Earl started living in some woods near a shopping center. His favorite place to visit was a nearby alfalfa field, where he ate every morning.

People began to gather there to watch Earl. They often crowded him, and sometimes they almost surrounded him. Experts knew that if Earl became frightened, he might hurt someone.

READING

A.2.3.1

9 Why are people in Missouri interested in Earl?

- ☐ Elk usually travel in groups.
- ☐ Elk usually live in other states. *
- ☐ Elk usually are afraid of people.
- ☐ Elk usually stay near their mothers.

The student is asked to determine why the people in Missouri are interested in Earl. Option B is correct since the passage describes how elk have not been seen in Missouri in a long time. Options A, C, and D relate to the passage, but none of these options correctly describe the reason people in Missouri are interested in Earl.

Modified from Item 25, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The stem has been simplified for easier processing. A word in an answer option has also been simplified for greater clarity.

READING

Read the next section of the passage.

Catching an Elk

Earl had to be moved to some other place. To do that, wildlife workers gave him a drug that made him drowsy. A veterinarian hid in the brush near Earl's path. When Earl came out of the woods for breakfast, the vet sedated him, using a rifle loaded with a shot of the drug instead of a bullet.

Only after Earl was captured did the people of Independence find some answers to the mystery of the elk. Earl's collar had a radio transmitter on it. Jim Pyland saw that none of the markings on the collar showed who had placed it on the animal. He began to look for the scientist who had "tagged" Earl.

After many phone calls, Pyland located Gary Olson, the man in Montana who had put the radio collar on Earl. The mystery of where Earl came from was solved.

Olson had put radio collars on ten elk to study their movements. Each collar sent a different radio signal. To track the elk, Olson "named" each elk after the radio frequency of its collar.

Olson lost track of Elk 964 (Earl) after spotting him twice in March of 1987. When Olson stopped receiving the elk's radio signal, he thought the radio transmitter had stopped working. It was also possible that Earl had gone so far away that the collar's signal could not reach Olson. But Olson never imagined how far Earl had strayed.

A Home for Earl

Now that Earl has been found, there is no reason to move him back to Montana. By the time he was captured, all of the places in the Sweetgrass Hills that make good elk territories had been claimed by other bulls.

Earl has recovered from his injuries. He lives with other elk in a park in Missouri. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation placed a sign there that describes his journey. And when the governor of Montana heard how far the elk had wandered, he named him a "roving ambassador" for the state.

READING

A.2.4.1

10 Why does Earl **most likely** stay in Missouri?

- ☐ Earl is too old to return to Montana.
- ☐ Earl's radio collar only works in Missouri.
- ☐ People would complain if Earl were taken away.
- ☐ The best places in Montana are taken by other elk. *

The student is asked to recall from the passage that Earl stays in Missouri because other elk have claimed all the territory in Montana, where he was from originally. Options A, B, and C relate to details in the passage, but none of these options correctly describe why Earl stays in Missouri.

Modified from Item 27, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The stem has been simplified and closed to reduce processing. Three of the answer options have been revised for greater clarity using text similar to the passage.

READING

Be sure to use the whole passage to answer questions 11–13.

A.2.6.1

11 Why did the author write the passage?

- ☐ to tell about an unusual elk *
- ☐ to describe how an elk behaves
- ☐ to tell how most elk find places to live
- ☐ to describe parks that are good for elk

The student is asked to determine why the author wrote the passage. Since the passage describes Earl, an unusual elk who journeyed much farther than most elks do, option A is correct. Options B, C, and D describe plausible reasons for writing that relate to the passage, but none of these options are correct.

Modified from Item 23, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The question in the stem has been simplified and closed for clarity. Two of the answer options have been simplified to reduce processing.

READING

A.2.3.2

12 Which statement **best** supports the generalization that “Most people in Missouri are not used to seeing elk”?

- ☐ People in Missouri call him Montana.
- ☐ The Missouri led him southeast to Independence.
- ☐ In Missouri, the last known native elk had been seen in 1840. *
- ☐ He lives with other elk in a park in Missouri.

The student is asked to choose the sentence from the passage that supports the generalization that “Most people in Missouri are not used to seeing elk.” Option C is the best choice since it relates directly to the last time an elk was spotted in Missouri. Options A, B, and D are sentences from the passage that do not support the generalization as well as option C.

Modified from Item 26, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: All of the quotation marks in the answer options have been removed to reduce processing, and two of the answer options have been resequenced to their same order of appearance in the passage for clearer accessibility.

READING

A.2.5.1

13 Which sentence is the **best** summary of the passage?

- ☐ Wildlife experts study elk using radio collars.
- ☐ Young elk leave home to find their own areas.
- ☐ An elk wanders far from home and becomes famous. *
- ☐ People are confused when an elk appears in a backyard.

The student is asked to determine which sentence is the best summary of the passage. Since the passage is mostly about Earl and his unique journey from Montana to Missouri, option C is the best answer. Options A, B, and D include details from the passage, but none of these options are an adequate summary.

Modified from Item 28, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: One word each in two answer options has been simplified for greater clarity and accessibility.

READING

PASSAGE 3

- Read the editorials “Vending Machines in School.”
- Read each editorial carefully.
- Then answer the questions that follow.
- Then go to the next editorial.

Vending Machines in School

Student 1 Editorial

During our sixth grade class meeting, our principal asked all of us to think about ways we could improve our school. The one thing that I think would be a tremendous help to all of the students is to offer only healthy food at school.

I usually bring my lunch to school because the meals in the cafeteria have too many fried foods and starches and not enough fruits and vegetables. For instance, the last day that I ate the school lunch, the cafeteria served hamburgers. For vegetables, we could choose French fries, macaroni and cheese, or soggy green beans. I didn’t see anybody choose the beans. Dessert that day was fruit cocktail in heavy syrup. That is a pretty typical lunch, but I think we could do a lot better.

Experts who specialize in children’s health recommend that kids have a limited amount of fried foods, sugary snacks, and fast foods. Instead, of course, we are supposed to eat fruits, vegetables, and healthy snacks. We could do this if they were readily available here at school, where we spend so much of our time.

One way to improve the lunches is to have a salad bar that also offers things like individual containers of yogurt. Every day there should be at least one kind of fresh fruit available. At my old school, we always at least had apples because the local farmers offered all the schools a good deal on them. We also got other fresh fruit and vegetables in season. Maybe we could check with farmers in this area.

READING

Also, I think that we should get rid of the machines that sell soda and junk food. Some kids don't use them just for snacks; they spend their lunch money there. Some of them have too much sugar and then they are hyperactive in class. Drinking one 12-ounce soda a day is like eating 10 teaspoons of sugar, and experts say that drinking one sweetened soda a day increases a child's chance of becoming overweight by 60 percent. Too much caffeine also causes kids to be jittery. Drinking sodas and eating candy bars keeps students from eating and drinking the things that their bodies need in order to work properly.

It would be nice if there were machines for those of us who would like to have a granola bar or a can of fruit juice—real fruit juice, not sugary, juice-flavored drinks. We should have milk machines, too. Take, for example, the commercial on TV that has famous people drinking milk. It must be a good idea, otherwise famous people wouldn't appear in the commercials. A recent poll indicated that 8 out of 10 individuals think that the soda machines should be replaced with machines for water, milk, and 100% juice. One school district has already removed all the soda and junk food machines. Why shouldn't we do the same thing?

It doesn't do us much good to learn about proper nutrition in class and then not be able to buy healthy snacks at school or eat a nutritious meal in the cafeteria. If we're going to say that being healthy is important, then all the choices at school should be healthy choices. After all, think about how much time we spend here.

READING

A.2.4.1

14 What is the main idea of the Student 1 Editorial?

- ☐ Improving schools is important.
- ☐ Good eating habits are helpful to have.
- ☐ Eating healthier foods results in healthier students. *
- ☐ Vending machines should offer more choices.

The student is asked to determine that the main idea of the first editorial is that students who eat healthy food are healthier in general, which is reflected in option C. Options A, B, and D include plausible main idea statements that are related to details in the first editorial, but none of these options reflect the main idea.

Modified from Item 38, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: Key words in the question have been stated more specifically for clarity and emphasis. The answer options have been resequenced, and the text for one of the options has been made simpler.

READING

A.2.3.1

15 Why does Student 1 mention that famous people are in the TV commercials for milk?

- ☐ so the reader will think drinking milk is important *
- ☐ so the reader will know milk commercials are on TV
- ☐ so the reader will understand that many people drink milk
- ☐ so the reader will believe that milk makes a person famous

The student is asked to determine that the author includes the fact that famous people appear in TV commercials for milk so the reader believes drinking milk is important. Options B, C, and D offer plausible reasons for the author including the detail, but none of these options are supported by the passage.

Modified from Item 39, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: New specific key words in the question have been added to provide clarity and emphasis, and the text of one of the answer options has been made simpler for greater accessibility.

READING

B.3.3.1

16 How is the Student 1 Editorial organized?

- ☐ reasons students like different foods are explained
- ☐ comparisons of cafeteria food and foods eaten at home are compared
- ☐ questions are asked about the food choices at school and answers are given
- ☐ the problem of unhealthy food at school and how the problem should be solved *

The student is asked to determine how the first editorial is organized. Since the author presents the problem of the school offering too many unhealthy foods and offers the solution that schools should offer healthier foods by implementing salad bars or healthier options in vending machines, option D is correct. Options A, B, and C reflect common organizational patterns and relate to the topic, but none of these options are correct.

Modified from Item 40, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: Key words in the question have been reworded more specifically for clarity and emphasis, and the text of the answer options has been revised for greater accessibility.

READING

Read the next editorial.

Student 2 Editorial

I definitely have some suggestions about improvements for this school. However, since I have to stick to just one suggestion, I've picked what is most important to me—food! We really need to do something to improve the variety of food here. All of my friends think so.

I think that we should add to the number of vending machines we have right now. I have seen a great one that offers different kinds of ice cream treats. It would be good, too, if we had a variety of soda machines. Choosing from the same ones every day gets really boring. The same thing is true of the machine for candy and chips. We only get a few choices when we should have as many as we have at the store. I've talked to my friends who go to other schools, and they all have many more choices than we do here.

The school shouldn't mind adding more machines because I know that the profit from the machines is divided up among the school clubs. We get to feel good every time we buy a soda or a candy bar because we know we're helping everyone at school. Also, one of the clubs at school collects the empty cans and takes them to recycling. The money from that is given to charity, so drinking a soda is really like donating money to a good cause!

The food in the cafeteria is really sad, too. I kept a record, and we had hamburgers ten times in the past month. That is completely boring. Again, what we need are more choices. I think they should have hamburgers every day because everybody likes hamburgers and fries, but they should have other things, too. They should offer pizza every day, but they could have different kinds. Then they could have something like fried chicken wings or chicken nuggets with dipping sauce. And they should always definitely have more than one dessert. I think there should be a suggestion box in the cafeteria and people could put in their ideas for dessert. Then we would have a great variety. My friends all agree that this is a good idea.

READING

Obviously, I think we need more variety in our food choices. That is important because the ability to make choices will make us happier and more content to be at school. A soda or a candy bar gives us quick energy so that we can be more alert in class, which makes the teachers happy.

Having a better selection of food in the cafeteria and in the vending machines is a win-win situation. Nobody loses.

A.2.1.1

17 Read the sentence from the Student 2 Editorial.

The school shouldn't mind adding more machines because I know that the profit from the machines is divided up among the school clubs.

Which meaning of the word mind is used in the editorial?

- ☐ be aware of
- ☐ take care of
- ☐ dislike *
- ☐ notice

The student is asked to choose the correct meaning of the word "mind," which has multiple meanings. In this case, the meaning is "dislike," which is listed in option C. Options A, B, and D include other meanings of the word "mind."

Modified from Item 41, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The introduction line has been revised using new key words for clarity and emphasis. The stem has changed from a dictionary definition excerpt to an excerpt from the editorial's text, with the focus vocabulary word underlined. The answer options have been revised using plausible word definitions rather than numeric designations.

READING

B.3.2.1

18 Exaggeration means to make something seem more than it is. Which sentence from the Student 2 Editorial is an example of exaggeration?

- ☐ The same thing is true of the machine for candy and chips.
- ☐ . . . collects the empty cans and takes them to recycling.
- ☐ . . . they should have hamburgers every day because everybody likes hamburgers . . . *
- ☐ Then they could have something like fried chicken wings or chicken nuggets . . .

The student is asked to choose the sentence from the second editorial that includes exaggeration. The idea that “everybody likes hamburgers” is an exaggeration because there are some people who do not like hamburgers, so option C is correct. Options A, B, and D are sentences from the second editorial that do not include exaggeration.

Modified from Item 45, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: A definition hint for “exaggeration” has been added to the stem, and the introduction line and the text excerpt in the stem have been replaced with a question which uses new key words for clarity and emphasis. All of the answer options have been revised using specific text excerpts that represent plausible examples to assist with the identification task.

READING

Be sure to use BOTH editorials to answer questions 19–22 and not just the last editorial.

B.1.2.1

19 Why did **both** students write the editorials?

- ☐ to persuade the reader to agree with an opinion about vending machines *
- ☐ to explain the different food choices in the cafeteria vending machines
- ☐ to persuade the reader to use the vending machines in the cafeteria
- ☐ to explain how the money from the vending machines could be used

The student is asked to determine that the students wrote the editorials to persuade the reader to agree with an opinion about vending machines, which is reflected in option A. Options B, C, and D include plausible reasons for writing that relate to the editorials, but none of these options are correct.

Modified from Item 42, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The text for the question in the stem has been revised for clarity. The answer options have been resequenced and also shortened and simplified to reduce processing.

READING

B.1.2.1

20 What conclusion can the reader make about **both** students who wrote the editorials?

- ☐ Both students enjoy the cafeteria food.
- ☐ Both students did research about healthy lunches.
- ☐ Both students believe their school should add a salad bar.
- ☐ Both students have strong feelings about the food at their school. *

The student is asked to determine which conclusion can be made about both students who wrote the editorials. The only option that is true about both students is that they feel strongly about the topic, which is reflected in option D. Options A, B, and C are statements that are true for either one or neither of the students.

Modified from Item 43, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The stem has been revised and made simpler to provide greater clarity. Two of the answer options have been resequenced, and the text in the answer options has been restated more directly.

READING

B.1.2.1

21 Which statement about the school is supported by **both** editorials?

- ☐ The school helps students make healthy food choices.
- ☐ The school will stop serving hamburgers.
- ☐ The school values the opinions of students. *
- ☐ The school gives the students a variety of dessert choices.

The student is asked to determine which statement about the school is supported by both editorials, which is reflected in option C. Options A, B, and D include details related to one or both editorials, but none of these options are necessarily true about the school.

Modified from Item 44, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The text in the stem and in one answer option has been simplified to reduce processing.

READING

SECOND OPEN-ENDED ITEM

B.1.2.1

22 In your own words, explain which editorial is **more** convincing.

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |

Use **two** examples from the editorial to support your explanation.

| |
|-------------------------|
| Example 1: _____ |
| |
| |
| |
| Example 2: _____ |
| |
| |
| |

Modified from Item 46, Grade 6 PSSA Reading Sampler 2008 – 2009

Modifications: The directions have been broken up into two parts for greater clarity and guidance. An introductory phrase has been added to the first direction, and both parts have been placed above their own response boxes. The second box has two example labels in bold-faced type for emphasis.

READING

ITEM-SPECIFIC SCORING GUIDELINE

Item #22

This item will be reported under Category B, Interpretation and Analysis of Fictional and Nonfictional Text.

Assessment Anchor:

B.1 Understand components within and between texts.

Specific Eligible Content addressed by this item:

B.1.2.1 Identify, interpret, compare, describe, and/or analyze connections between texts.

Scoring Guide:

| Score | In response to this item, the student— |
|--------------|---|
| 3 | demonstrates complete knowledge of making connections between texts by explaining which editorial is more convincing and by using at least two examples from the editorials to support the explanation. |
| 2 | demonstrates partial knowledge of making connections between texts by explaining which editorial is more convincing. (Example: Student explains which editorial is more convincing and supports the explanation by using one example from the editorial.) |
| 1 | demonstrates incomplete knowledge of making connections between texts by explaining which editorial is more convincing. (Example: Student uses one example from an editorial to imply an explanation of which editorial is more convincing without explicitly stating the explanation.) |
| 0 | gives a response that provides insufficient material for scoring or is inaccurate in all aspects. |
| Non-scorable | BLK (blank)... No response or written refusal to respond or too brief to determine response OT Off task/topic LOE..... Response in a language other than English IL..... Illegible |

Example—Top Scoring Response (3 Points):

| Explanation and Examples |
|--|
| Student 1 Editorial is more convincing because it tells why the foods in the cafeteria and the vending machines are not good for the kids. The cafeteria meals have too many fried foods. The vending machines have sodas and sugary drinks instead of fruit juice and milk. |

READING

OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

B.1.2.1 Response Score: 3 points

22 In your own words, explain which editorial is **more** convincing.

| |
|--------------------------------|
| I like student 2. It tells how |
| having the vending machines in |
| the school help people. |
| |

Use **two** examples from the editorial to support your explanation.

| |
|----------------------------|
| Example 1: _____ |
| The money kids put in the |
| machines is given to the |
| school clubs. |
| Example 2: _____ |
| They collect cans from the |
| trash to recycle and get |
| money for charity. |

The student has given a complete answer to the task by explaining which editorial is more convincing ("I like student 2. It tells how having the vending machines in the school help people") and by using two examples from the editorial ("money kids put in the machines is given to the school clubs" and "They collect cans from the trash to recycle and get money for charity") to support the explanation.

READING

B.1.2.1 Response Score: 2 points

22 In your own words, explain which editorial is **more** convincing.

Student 2 is better. Machines have more to chose from and students and teachers are happy.

Use **two** examples from the editorial to support your explanation.

Example 1: Kids won't be bored if they don't eat the same things all the time.

Example 2: Teachers will like to have them.

The student has given a partial answer to the task by explaining which editorial is more convincing ("Student 2 is better. Machines have more to chose from and students and teachers are happy") and by using one example from the editorial ("Kids won't be bored") to support the explanation.

READING

B.1.2.1 Response Score: 2 points

22 In your own words, explain which editorial is **more** convincing.

| |
|-----------|
| Student 1 |
| |
| |
| |

Use **two** examples from the editorial to support your explanation.

| |
|--|
| Example 1: One soda is like eating 10 spoons of sugar. |
| |
| |
| Example 2: Too much caffeine makes kids jittery. |
| |
| |

The student has given a partial answer to the task by using two examples from an editorial (“One soda is like eating 10 spoons of sugar” and “Too much caffeine make kids jittery”) that imply why that editorial is more convincing, without explicitly giving an explanation.

READING

B.1.2.1 Response Score: 1 point

22 In your own words, explain which editorial is **more** convincing.

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Number 1 because students don't |
| need alot of deserts. |
| |
| |

Use **two** examples from the editorial to support your explanation.

| | |
|------------|----------------------|
| Example 1: | It costs more money. |
| | |
| | |
| Example 2: | Kids like junk food. |
| | |
| | |

The student has given an incomplete answer to the task by explaining which editorial is more convincing ("Number 1 because students don't need alot of deserts") without using any examples to support the explanation.

READING

B.1.2.1 Response Score: 1 point

22 In your own words, explain which editorial is **more** convincing.

| |
|--------------------------------|
| Number 2 because students like |
| milk. |
| |
| |

Use **two** examples from the editorial to support your explanation.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Example 1: | Number 2 says candy bars |
| | gives kids energy. |
| | |
| Example 2: | |
| | Energy is important. |
| | |

The student has given an incomplete answer to the task by using one example from one editorial ("Number 2 says candy bars gives kids energy") that implies which editorial is more convincing, without explicitly giving an explanation.

READING

B.1.2.1 Response Score: 0

22 In your own words, explain which editorial is **more** convincing.

| |
|-------------------|
| Vending machines. |
| |
| |
| |

Use **two** examples from the editorial to support your explanation.

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Example 1: | Soda is good. |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Example 2: | candy is good. |
| | |
| | |
| | |

The student has given a response that provides insufficient material for scoring.

READING

Acknowledgements

“Surfing Iowa” copyright © 2002 by Highlights for Children, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.

“Earl the Elk’s Excellent Adventure” copyright © 1995 by Highlights for Children, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.

**Modified Reading
Grade 6
Item and Scoring Sampler**

Copyright © 2010 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The materials contained in this publication may be duplicated by Pennsylvania educators for local classroom use. This permission does not extend to the duplication of materials for commercial use.