



**South Dakota Department of Education
Testing Coordinators Handbook
State Writing Assessment
2013-2014**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Background:

South Dakota state law requires all students in grades 5, 7, and 10 to participate in a state writing assessment. A few years ago, students in these grades were assessed by the Dakota Writing Assessment, a timed, summative assessment. This test was suspended November 2009 due to a number of concerns expressed both by teachers and administrators. During Spring 2010, in place of the Dakota Writing Assessment, the South Dakota Department of Education implemented an online, benchmark writing assessment pilot using the student literacy program WriteToLearn.

With this pilot, students completed the new assessment during a one month testing window. Throughout the testing window, teachers were able to set the parameters of how a student used the WriteToLearn program, including the scoring thresholds, the number of revisions allowed, and the prompts selected. Because of this flexibility, the South Dakota Department of Education did not collect student scores. Rather, compliance was based strictly on student participation.

The rationale for this change in the writing assessment was to place a greater focus on the writing process instead of students' scores. With this shift to a benchmark assessment model, teachers are afforded the flexibility to use the WriteToLearn program as an instructional tool to support their own classroom writing instruction.

For assistance contact:

South Dakota Department of Education
Matt Gill
605.773.8193
Matthew.Gill@state.sd.us

South Dakota WriteToLearn Website
<http://doe.sd.gov/oats/writetolearn.aspx>

Pearson WriteToLearn Technical Support
1-888-977-7100 (7:00 AM and 7:00 PM Central Time, Monday – Friday)
<http://support.pearsonschool.com/index.cfm/support/>

Additional Resources

A listserv for teachers participating in the state writing assessment is also available. Interested teachers may join this listserv at the following website:

<http://www.k12.sd.us/Listserv/WriteToLearn.htm>

Requirements

Writing Submissions

During the 2013-2014 school year, students in grades 5, 7, & 10 will need to submit two ESSAY writing submissions within the WriteToLearn program. Summaries don't count.

Testing Window

During the 2013-2014 school year, students will participate in one testing window, which will run from September 3, 2013 through April 30, 2014. Students may submit their two writing samples at any time during this testing window.

Student Reports

The reporting requirement for the state writing assessment has been eliminated again for the 2013-2014 school year. School districts are no longer required to send student writing results from the WriteToLearn program home to parents.

Important Dates

Event	Date
Licenses Available to Districts	September 3, 2013
Testing Window Opens	September 3, 2013
District Testing Coordinator Trainings (online)	August 26, 2013
	August 27, 2013
New Teacher Trainings (online)	September 10, 2013
	September 13, 2013
Veteran Teacher Trainings (online)	September 9, 2013
	September 10, 2013
Deadline to Submit List of Participating Teachers	October 25, 2013
Follow-up Teacher Trainings (online)	November, 2013
	November, 2013
Mid-Year Teacher Trainings (online)	January, 2014
Testing Window Closes	April 30, 2014
Testing Irregularities due to DOE	May 15, 2014
Student Licenses Expire	August, 2014

TRAININGS

District Testing Coordinator Trainings

All district testing coordinators will be required to attend a one-hour online training related to the state writing assessment. This meeting will detail the requirements for the state writing assessment and will provide an opportunity for district testing

coordinators to clarify any questions about the assessment process. Training dates and the meeting link are listed below.

Meeting Link: <https://www.livemeeting.com/cc/stateofsd1/join?id=G8T4CK&role=attend&pw=WTL>
Call-in Number: 866-410-8397
Conference Code: 8134973389

<u>Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
New Testing Coordinators	August 26, 2013	10am-11am CST
Veteran Testing Coordinators	August 26, 2013	3pm-4pm CST
Veteran Testing Coordinators	August 27, 2013	10am-11am CST
New Testing Coordinators	August 27, 2013	2pm-3pm CST

Teacher Trainings

All teacher trainings will be held online. All new teachers who have not used the WriteToLearn program before must attend one of these trainings. Training for teachers who have used the program previously is optional. There is no limit to the number of teachers who may participate from each district. Teachers attending these trainings will be trained on how to use the WriteToLearn program in the classroom. These sessions will also be recorded and available for future viewing on the South Dakota Department of Education website.

Teachers must register for their preferred training date. Registration for teacher trainings will open August 1, 2013. The following link will direct teachers to the registration site:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dHk3OEh6OVVwaVNGQS1nc2xOclJrOVE6MQ>

Training dates and the online meeting link are listed below.

Meeting Link: <https://www.livemeeting.com/cc/stateofsd1/join?id=G8T4CK&role=attend&pw=WTL>
Call-in Number: 866-410-8397
Conference Code: 8134973389

<u>Date</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Time</u>
September 10, 2013	New Teacher Training	4pm -6pm CDT
September 13, 2013	New Teacher Training	12pm -2pm CDT
September 9, 2012	Veteran Teacher Training	4pm -5pm CDT
September 10, 2012	Veteran Teacher Training	11am -1pm CDT

Participating Teachers

A list of all teachers who will be using the WriteToLearn program for state assessment purposes must be submitted by the district testing coordinator to the South Dakota Department of Education by October 26, 2012. The submission form for this list can be found at <http://doe.sd.gov/oats/writetolearn.asp> on the right-hand side.

ASSESSMENT LOGISTICS

Testing Window

One testing window will be held throughout the school year. The window will open on September 3, 2013 and close on April 30, 2013. During this timeframe, all students in grades 5, 7, & 10 must submit two writing submissions.

Testing Environments

The state writing assessment can be administered in a variety of testing environments. Though the English/Language Arts classroom is likely the most common testing environment, schools may consider administering the assessment in other content areas.

Classroom teachers have the flexibility to administer the state writing assessment in a variety of settings and timeframes. These settings should support the regular classroom writing curriculum and instruction rather than creating a separate disjointed learning experience.

Classrooms with Multi-Grade Enrollments

The South Dakota Department of Education recognizes that unique circumstances may exist where students outside of grades 5, 7, and 10, particularly at the high school level, are enrolled in a classroom whose remaining enrollment is predominantly made up of students participating in the state writing assessment.

It is not the intention of the South Dakota Department of Education to cause an undue burden upon classroom teachers by creating a situation where separate classroom activities must be developed for one or two students who are not part of the state writing assessment cohort while the remaining majority of the classroom uses the WriteToLearn program. Consequently, the South Dakota Department of Education expects classroom teachers to exercise professional judgment and if appropriate, include the additional one or two students outside of the testing cohort within the classroom benchmark assessment process. The use of WriteToLearn student licenses for this purpose will be deducted from the school building's total allotment of student licenses for grades 5, 7, and 10, and this practice will be monitored closely by the South Dakota Department of Education. Thus, discretion should be exercised when off-grade students are enrolled in this manner.

Materials Provided:

The South Dakota Department of Education will purchase student licenses for all students in grades 5, 7, and 10.

Each school building will be provided with enough student licenses for the number of students enrolled in grades 5, 7, and 10 as well as a 15% overage of student licenses. These extra licenses can be accessed once 90% of the distributed licenses have been used and should be used only for new student enrollments in grades 5, 7, & 10 within the building. If school buildings are in need of additional licenses after the 15% overage has been used, they should contact the South Dakota Department of Education for further assistance.

If schools are interested in the use of off-grade licenses (grades 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12), the district will be responsible for these costs. These licenses cost \$10 per student. Districts should work directly with Pearson to purchase off-grade student licenses. Contact information for Pearson is listed below.

Carrie Austin
Pearson Account Representative
Phone: 1-888-977-7900 ext. 6051
Email: carrie.austin@pearson.com

Minimum Technical Requirements

The minimum system requirements for using WriteToLearn are:

Windows

- Windows XP, Windows 7
- 512 MB RAM (minimum)
- Microsoft Internet Explorer 7.0 or higher, Firefox 4.0 or higher
- JavaScript enabled
- Flash plug-in 9.0 or higher

Macintosh

- OS X 10.5 or higher
- 512 MB RAM (minimum)
- Firefox 4.0 or higher, Safari 5.0 or higher
- JavaScript enabled
- Flash plug-in 9.0 or higher

Tablet

- iPad, iOS 5.1 or higher (external keyboard recommended; limited text-to-speech capabilities)

Monitor Resolution

- 1024 x 768 (minimum)

Bandwidth

- 512 Kb/sec (minimum) if using the text-to-speech feature and 256 Kb/sec (minimum) otherwise

Student Data Uploads:

WriteToLearn will be ready for schools to use on September 3rd. Student data will be uploaded into WriteToLearn based on the August roll-up in Infinite Campus. Any new students enrolled in a building after August 20th will need to be enrolled manually by the district's WriteToLearn account administrator.

Student I.D. and Passwords

Each student in grades 5, 7, and 10 is assigned a unique user I.D. and password for the WriteToLearn program. The student's user I.D. is his or her 9-digit state SIMS number. The student's password is the first four characters of his or her last name followed by his or her two digit birth month and date. For example, student John Smith's password might be *smit1020*. When enrolling new students into the WriteToLearn program, these specifications for student i.d.'s and passwords must be used.

In order for the South Dakota Department of Education to track student participation, a student's user I.D. **MUST** remain as his or her 9-digit state SIMS number. Any changes to the student user I.D. will result in the student being out of compliance with the state writing assessment.

In some instances, student state SIMS numbers begin with a leading zero. Account administrators and teachers are encouraged to pay close attention to this, as the elimination of the leading zero will create log-in difficulties for students.

Yearly Maintenance for Building Accounts:

At the end of each of academic year, testing coordinators will be responsible for performing yearly maintenance on their school district's WriteToLearn system. This maintenance includes removing teacher accounts of those individuals who will not be using the program the following school year.

Private and BIE Schools

Private and Tribal schools in South Dakota are invited to participate in the state writing assessment using the WriteToLearn program. Additionally, the South Dakota Department of Education will purchase WriteToLearn student licenses for all students in grades 5, 7, and 10 who attend private or BIE schools. Private and BIE schools are not required to participate in the state writing assessment and may choose to opt-out of the process.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Student Participation:

With the state writing assessment, all students in grades 5, 7, and 10 are required to respond to two teacher-selected essay prompts during the one scheduled testing window. Revision requirements of the essay submissions are left to the discretion of the classroom teacher. Additionally, students are not limited to only two annual submissions.

Students in grades 5, 7, and 10 who participate in the DSTEP-A will be required to participate in an alternative writing assessment outside of the WriteToLearn program. The South Dakota Department of Education will provide districts with additional information related to the alternative writing assessment during Fall 2013.

At the high school level particularly, the SD Department of Education deems that a public school student will be counted as participating in 10th grade. If a student does not participate in the WriteToLearn assessment in 10th grade, the student must participate in the WriteToLearn assessment in 11th grade. The SD Department of Education will send progress reports to district testing coordinators throughout the year. Exemption from this participation rule includes if a student moves to South Dakota from another state or country as an 11th or 12th grader. If this is the case, they do not need to participate in the state writing assessment at the high school level, but are welcome to do so if the school district desires.

Due to the large amount of flexibility afforded to teachers during this assessment, student scores will not be collected and proficiency levels will not be assigned at the state level. Districts have the flexibility to set their own student performance goals, but the South Dakota Department of Education will only monitor student participation during each testing window.

Student Participation Data

Student participation data is recorded within the WriteToLearn program each time a student clicks the “Get Feedback” button within the student interface.

The South Dakota Department of Education will extract participation data from the WriteToLearn system intermittently throughout the testing window and immediately following the close of the testing window. The South Dakota Department of Education will follow up with schools that demonstrate low participation rates and will send out multiple progress reports throughout the second semester.

All students in grades 5, 7, and 10 must be accounted for with the state writing assessment. Thus, testing coordinators must submit testing irregularity information for all students who do not complete two submissions by the close of the testing window.

Student Testing Irregularities

A testing irregularity report must be filed for each student who does not submit two writing samples by the close of the testing window. It is the school district’s responsibility to determine how these irregularities will be tracked within each school building. A student irregularity form can be downloaded from the South Dakota Department of Education website at <http://doe.sd.gov/oats/writetolearn.aspx>, and should be submitted to Matt Gill at Matthew.Gill@state.sd.us by May 15, 2014.

DISTRICT TESTING COORDINATORS

South Dakota Department of Education Communication with School Districts

The district testing coordinator will serve as the main contact for the South Dakota Department of Education in regards to the state writing assessment. All information related to the assessment will be communicated directly to district testing coordinators. District testing coordinators will be expected to communicate assessment information from the South Dakota Department of Education with the appropriate district personnel.

District Testing Coordinator Responsibilities:

District testing coordinators will serve as the main contact for South Dakota Department of Education in relationship to the state writing assessment. Testing coordinator responsibilities related to the state writing assessment include, but are not limited to the following:

- Attend one online district testing coordinator training session related to the state writing assessment
- Monitor new student enrollments throughout the writing assessment testing window and determine who will create new student accounts within the WriteToLearn program when new students enroll within the building.
- Identify teachers within the district who will be participating in the state writing assessment and ensure that new teachers attend an online teacher training for the WriteToLearn program.
- Ensure teacher accounts are created within the WriteToLearn program and log-in information is distributed to teachers.
- Submit a list of teachers who will be using the WriteToLearn program for state assessment purposes to South Dakota Department of Education by October 25, 2013. The submission form for this list can be found at <http://doe.sd.gov/oats/writetolearn.aspx>.
- Communicate all state writing assessment requirements to all teachers participating in the state writing assessment.
- Ensure student URLs and log-in information for the WriteToLearn program are distributed to teachers in a timely fashion.
- Ensure all WriteToLearn URLs are accessible to students and teachers based on local Internet security settings.
- Verify the participation of all students in grades 5, 7, and 10 in the state writing assessment during the testing window.

- Submit testing irregularity forms for all students who did not participate in the state writing assessment by May 15, 2014. Testing irregularities should be submitted via email to Matt Gill at matthew.gill@state.sd.us. The submission form for testing irregularities can be found at <http://doe.sd.gov/oats/writetolearn.aspx>.
- At the end of each school year, delete the accounts of any teachers who will no longer be using the WriteToLearn program in the following school year.

TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE WRITING ASSESSMENT

Teacher Accounts within the WriteToLearn Program

A school district may have an unlimited number of teacher accounts within the WriteToLearn program at no additional cost. Teachers and other school district personnel, such as paraprofessionals, can be easily added to the system by the school district's account administrator.

Teacher Flexibility

Teachers have great flexibility in administering the state writing assessment. These flexibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The use of a pre-existing essay prompt within the system or the use of a teacher-created essay prompt
- The ability to use prompts aligned to the Common Core English Language Arts standards
- The ability to adjust the scoring thresholds, word counts, and other settings on each assigned prompt
- The ability to determine the amount of time students spend working on a prompt
- The assignment of different prompts to different students
- The use of off-grade prompts, as appropriate, for each student
- The required number of revision attempts made by students
- The number of classroom sessions and time devoted to a specific essay prompt

With these flexibilities, teachers are encouraged to use the WriteToLearn program as an instructional tool that works in tandem with their regular writing curriculum and instruction. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to use the student data generated by the WriteToLearn program to further differentiate and individualize student instruction, paying close attention to English Language Arts Common Core State Standards.

Teacher Responsibilities:

Teacher responsibilities related to the state writing assessment include, but are not limited to the following:

- Create classrooms within the WriteToLearn program
- Enroll students in the created classrooms within the WriteToLearn program
- Post the student WriteToLearn URL in an easily accessible place (e.g. desktop shortcut, school website, favorites list, etc.)
- Instruct students on how to use the WriteToLearn program and provide details to students on how information gained from the WriteToLearn program will be used for classroom instruction
- Assign students, at a minimum, two essay prompts during the testing window throughout the school year
- Use the WriteToLearn program as an instructional tool in conjunction with regular classroom writing instruction in order to support the benchmark assessment process; especially CCSS for ELA
- Consider the amount of flexibility afforded to teachers within the WriteToLearn program and adjust assigned essay prompt settings to meet both classroom and individual student needs as necessary
- Provide appropriate student accommodations according to a student's IEP/504/LAP during the use of the WriteToLearn program;
- After students have submitted responses, access student and classroom reports to examine data about student writing
- Consider the use of summary writing activities within the WriteToLearn program to supplement instruction in a variety of content areas. Please note, summary writing activities do **not** meet student participation requirements for the South Dakota Department of Education state writing assessment

Use of Essay Prompts

A variety of essay prompts are available within the WriteToLearn program, many of them noted as "Common Core Practice." The use of an essay prompt is required for state compliance purposes. Essay prompts developed by Pearson are available for grades 3-12. Nearly 60 new essay (argumentative) prompts, as well as our visual writing prompts, can be found within WriteToLearn. Teachers are also free to create their own prompts within the WriteToLearn program. Both prompts created by teachers and

Pearson may be used for compliance purposes. Additionally, teachers may use prompts outside students' grade levels, as appropriate, for state writing assessment purposes.

Feedback on Essay Prompts

Some prompts provided by Pearson are scored with both an overall score and separate six-trait scores. These six traits include ideas, organization, conventions, sentence fluency, word choice, and voice. Spelling and grammar checks are independent of these six trait scores and are not included within the student's overall score. Other Pearson prompts and teacher-created prompts are only scored with an overall score. Teachers can determine how the prompt will be scored within the activity selection screen of the teacher interface under the column labeled "description."

Student responses to teacher-created prompts will only receive an overall score. Students will not receive six trait scores on teacher-created prompts.

Un-scorable Essay Prompts

If the WriteToLearn scoring engine is not confident it can return an accurate score, it will instead return a message suggesting that the student review the essay with his or her teacher. This can happen for a variety of reasons: the essay may be too short, the essay may be much longer than expected, or the essay may be off-topic or highly creative.

Even if the evaluation of a student essay response does not produce a score, the submission will be counted for student participation and will meet South Dakota Department of Education compliance requirements. In order to ensure the participation requirement is met, a teacher should verify that the student's available number of attempts for the particular essay prompt is decreased by one after submitting the essay. Teachers are strongly encouraged to grade such student submissions by hand in order to assist the student in learning from and improving upon his or her writing submission.

Use of Summary Writing Activities

Summary writing activities are available for student use within the WriteToLearn program. These activities cover a wide variety of content areas, including science, social studies, and language arts. Teachers have the option of setting a mandatory vocabulary review and quiz before students can access the summary activity. Though these activities are available for use and provide additional opportunities for literacy development, the use of summary writing activities will not meet South Dakota Department of Education compliance requirements for the state writing assessment.

Use of Word Processing Programs

Students are not required to type their responses directly into the WriteToLearn program. Students may compose their responses in a word-processing program first and then copy them into the WriteToLearn program, if desired. Because grammar and spelling are checked independently of a student's score within the WriteToLearn program, the use of these features within word processing programs will not alter a student's score.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Description of Accommodations Categories

Accommodations are commonly categorized in four ways: presentation, response, setting, and timing and scheduling:

- Presentation Accommodations—Allow students to access information in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access are auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, and visual.
- Response Accommodations—Allow students to complete activities, assignments, and assessments in different ways or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer.
- Setting Accommodations—Change the location in which a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting.
- Timing and Scheduling Accommodations—Increase the allowable length of time to complete an assignment and perhaps change the way the time is organized.

Modification or Alterations vs. Accommodations

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They provide access. However, modifications or alterations refer to practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations. Modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level. Using modifications may result in implications that could adversely affect students throughout their educational career. Examples of modifications include:

- requiring a student to learn less material (e.g., fewer objectives, shorter units or lessons, fewer pages or problems),
- reducing assignments and assessments so a student only needs to complete the easiest problems or items,
- revising assignments or assessments to make them easier (e.g., crossing out half of the response choices on a multiple-choice test so that a student only has to pick from two options instead of four), or
- giving a student hints or clues to correct responses on assignments and tests.

Providing modifications to students during classroom instruction and/or classroom assessments may have the unintended consequence of reducing their opportunity to learn critical content. If students have not had access to critical, assessed content, they may be at risk for not meeting graduation requirements.

Accommodation Use

When selecting accommodations for state assessments with a student, it is important to look at state policies and procedures to determine whether use of an accommodation results in consequences on a state test (e.g., lowering or not counting a student's score). Assessment accommodations that result in adverse consequences are commonly

referred to as modifications, adaptations, alterations, and nonstandard or nonapproved accommodations (Thurlow & Wiener, 2000). The terminology can be confusing and terms may have different meanings in various contexts.

Accommodation Use for the State Writing Assessment

Numerous accommodations are available for the state writing assessment. These accommodations include, but are not limited to the following:

- Presentation Accommodations
 - Large print
 - Magnification devices
 - Human reader
 - Audio amplification devices
 - Screen reader
 - Sign Language

- Response Accommodations
 - Scribe
 - Word processor
 - Speech to text
 - Spelling and grammar devices
 - Visual organizers
 - Graphic organizers

- Setting Accommodations
 - Reduce distractions to the student
 - Reduce distractions to other students
 - Change location to increase physical access or to use special equipment

- Timing and Scheduling Accommodations
 - Extended time
 - Multiple or frequent breaks
 - Change schedule or order of activities

Guidelines for Scribes

Students using the dictation-to-scribe accommodation will not be required to spell every word to the scribe. This accommodation should not influence the student's six trait score because spelling and grammar are scored independently of these traits. However, with this accommodation, the spelling and grammar checks within the WriteToLearn program may not provide appropriate feedback to the student.

Compatible Screen Readers

- JAWS for Windows 7.0
- HAL 6.51
- Window-Eyes 5.5

Minimum Word Count

The WriteToLearn program requires a student to type 50 words before it is able to evaluate his or her writing submission. It should be noted that the evaluation of the 50-word submission may not produce a student score. However, the submission will be counted for student participation and will meet South Dakota Department of Education compliance requirements even though a student score is not generated. A classroom teacher is able to determine if a student's submission is recorded as an attempt within the program by noting if the remaining available student attempts have decreased.

If a student score is not rendered by the WriteToLearn program, classroom teachers are strongly encouraged to score a student's writing by hand in order to ensure students have the opportunity to learn from and improve upon their writing submission.