



PARCC/NJSLA Research Simulation Task Grades 3-11

Understanding the PCR Prompt and Writing a Thesis Statement

Rationale

- ✚ PARCC/NJSLA's prose constructed response (PCR) represents a significant change from previous tests' essay prompts. On the Research Simulation Task, these prompts require students to write an argumentative or informative/explanatory essay based solely on textual evidence found in the associated texts.
- ✚ For students to write proficient responses, they need to start with a strong grasp of the prompt's requirements and must be able to develop a strong thesis statement that fully addresses the prompt.

Goals

- ✚ To understand a PCR prompt
- ✚ To write a thesis statement that directly addresses all aspects of the PCR prompt

Task Foci

- ✚ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1:** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Objectives

- ✚ Students will examine and understand the PCR prompt
- ✚ Students will write a thesis statement that specifically addresses all aspects of the PCR prompt

Materials

- ✚ Sample text 1 (teacher choice)
 - ✚ Sample text 2 (teacher choice)
 - ✚ PCR prompt
 - ✚ Prompt/Thesis worksheet
- *samples of Grade 5 texts and PCR are included*

Procedures

Part 1

- ✚ Hand out the sample texts to students and have them read it independently. For this first read, they can take notes if they'd like to, but let them know that they will have the opportunity to take notes during a second reading.
- ✚ Next, present the PCR prompt to the class and hand out the PCR prompt/Thesis Statement worksheet.

- ✚ Work through the prompt as a class, asking questions such as: **What specific aspects of the text is the prompt drawing your attention to? Is it asking you to compare and contrast two ideas, people, or arguments? Is it asking you to compare how several articles treat one subject?**
- ✚ Address any questions the students might have.
- ✚ Tell your students that with this prompt in mind to re-read the text and look for details they think would help them answer the prompt. Allow time for them to read carefully and make annotations.
- ✚ In closing, have students share what they noted. To prepare them to write thesis statements, ask them how they could use their findings to answer the prompt.

Part 2

- ✚ In this part of the lesson, students will use the texts and their notes from Part 1 to construct a thesis statement to answer the prompt.
- ✚ Explain that a thesis statement is a one or two sentence claim about a given topic, in this case the topic elicited from the PCR prompt.
- ✚ Model a thesis statement.
- ✚ Ask students: **What makes a good thesis statement?**
- ✚ Give students the opportunity to share what they may already know about what makes a good thesis statement.
- ✚ Inform students that a good thesis statement:
 - answers the prompt completely
 - clearly states your position
 - is debatable (someone could argue the opposite)
 - is one or two sentences
 - can be supported by evidence from the text
- ✚ After this discussion, tell students that now they will use the texts and their notes to write their own thesis statements.
- ✚ Have students return to the Thesis Worksheet and their annotated texts and complete the assignment.
- ✚ In closing, ask students to share their thesis statements, working through any problems or challenges they encountered while writing them.

Teacher Tips

- ✚ For Part I: Circulate around the room while students are doing their second reading and taking notes. Pay attention to what passages students are underlining and if their notes are accurately capturing the information in the text.
- ✚ For Part II: Check for evidence that students are using textual support to develop their thesis statements.

Extension Activity

- ✚ Students can evaluate each other's theses for effectiveness. This can be done anonymously. Evaluating the effectiveness of others' theses will help students understand the strengths and weaknesses of their own.

Writing a Thesis Statement

Identify what the PCR is requiring

Read the Prose Constructed Response and identify what the prompt is asking you to do. In the box below the PCR, write a sentence that describes what the prompt is asking you to write about.

The two of the articles you've read give information about how to stay safe in a variety of weather conditions. Write an essay where you argue which season has the most hazards. Why aren't the other two seasons as dangerous as the one you chose? Use details from the articles to support your answer

What is the prompt asking?

Give it a try, write a thesis statement

Now that you know what the prompt is asking you to do, rewrite the prompt as a thesis statement.

Checklist

My thesis statement:

- answers the prompt completely
- clearly states my position
- is debatable (someone could argue the opposite)
- is one or two sentences
- can be supported by evidence in the text

Grade 5 Sample Texts and PCR

What is diabetes?

from CDC.gov

Your body makes a hormone called insulin. It helps break down the food you eat every day. Every time you eat something, your body turns that food into glucose. This is what you use for energy. If a person has diabetes, his or her body has trouble producing enough insulin to do this. Or, it's not able to use the insulin it makes. Either way, their cells can't use the energy from the food they eat. They build up too much sugar in their blood and urine.

Having too much sugar in your blood can impair every part of your body. It is hard on your eyes, kidneys, nerves, heart, and even gums! Over a lifetime, having diabetes puts someone at much greater risk of heart attack, stroke, blindness, and kidney failure. Circulation problems and nerve damage can also mean that people with diabetes have to have their feet or legs amputated.

Fortunately, diabetes can be prevented in many cases. And, taking good care of yourself if you have diabetes can prevent a lot of these scary things from happening.

There are two types of diabetes. They have equivalent effects. With both types, your body can't process glucose right. Different things cause them. Juvenile diabetes got its name because most people who got this type of the disease got it when they were children (even though adults can get it, too). Now, it is called type 1 diabetes. This kind of diabetes happens when the immune system attacks the cells that make insulin in a body organ called the pancreas. Without insulin, you develop diabetes. Between 5 and 10 percent of people with diabetes have this kind.

The other kind of diabetes is called type 2 diabetes. With this kind, your body makes insulin. But it either doesn't make enough, or something prevents your body from using it right.

Until recently, most cases of type 2 diabetes were in older people and adults who were overweight. In the last few years, though, more and more kids are being diagnosed with this kind of diabetes. Most likely, this is because kids today are more likely to be overweight and not get enough exercise than they were in the past. Children who are African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than others.

Because diabetes causes people to have too much glucose, or sugar, in their blood, a lot of people call it sugar or sugar diabetes. No matter the name, though, it's all the same disease. Scientists do not know exactly how many kids have diabetes. They do know that doctors are seeing more and more cases of diabetes in kids. And most of these cases are now type 2 diabetes, which used to be very rare among kids.

How would I know if I have diabetes?

from CDC.gov

Signs of type 1 diabetes are usually hard to miss. They include being unusually thirsty or hungry, having to pee a lot, and being really tired. Rapidly losing weight and having blurry vision are also symptoms of type 1 diabetes. These often happen really quickly - in just a few weeks. If you notice these symptoms, tell your parents right away so that a doctor can check you out.

Many people with type 2 diabetes don't have any signs, especially in the early stages. Over time, someone with type 2 diabetes might see some of the same signs as type 1.

Why do I hear so much about diabetes now? Do more people have it?

A lot more people have diabetes now - over 18 million Americans. That's more than twice as many people as 20 years ago. While most people with diabetes are over 50 years old, rates of diabetes in kids have been going up really quickly -- about a percent a year. So, even though it's still pretty rare for a kid to have it, more kids than ever before are living with this disease.

Is there a cure for diabetes?

There is no panacea for diabetes. Rather than being cured, people can control the disease with medicine, exercise, and eating right. These three things work together to keep blood sugar under control.

There are a lot of different medicines to treat diabetes. One type you might have heard of is insulin shots. They probably sound scary - who wants to get a shot every day? But for people with type 1 diabetes, taking insulin every day is a lifesaver. And, many kids will tell you that it's not such a big deal once you get used to it. Also, today many kids who need insulin get it through a pump that attaches to their bodies. They wear it on their waist, and it looks like a pager or cell phone.

For kids with type 2 diabetes, doctors will first help them try to lose some weight. Doctors also help kids increase their exercise, and eat a better diet. This often works to control their diabetes. Some kids with type 2 diabetes have to take a pill or insulin every day, too.

For any person with diabetes, eating right and getting exercise are very important in keeping it under control. And, keeping weight within a healthy range is also really good for someone with diabetes. Being overweight can make controlling blood sugar more difficult.

Research Simulation Task Prose Constructed Response

Both of the texts you've read give information about diabetes. Use what you have learned to write an essay that explains what public health officials in the United States should do to **DECREASE** the rate of children getting diabetes in the future. Use specific details from the text to support your points.