The AzMERIT rubric focuses on two main indicators for writing — **Purpose, Focus, and Organization** and **Evidence and Elaboration**. There is no requirement on the number of paragraphs in the essay; while many students provide four to five paragraphs, many three-paragraph essays have also received the highest score rating. It is the quality of the response along with support for the main idea that determines the rating the essay receives.

Using evidence from the text is a key component of the AzMERIT rubric.
Write an argumentative essay about... Use information from the passages in your essay.

- Read the passages.
- Plan your response.
- Write your response.
- Revise and edit your response.

You must include:
- A claim.
- Counterclaims.
- Evidence from multiple sources.
- Avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.

Whether the prompt is Argumentative or Informative, using information from the text to support ideas is critical.

Note that the students who are below grade level have less access to writing based on a text. Compare 22% of writing assignments given to students who are below grade level to 60% of the writing assignments given to above grade level students. Providing text sets or your adopted classroom materials for ALL students to refer to will increase everyone’s ability to use evidence from text.

Slide 6

For many students, having a sentence frame can help them begin in using evidence from the text to support their ideas.

Slide 7

Getting Started: For a classroom assignment, you might want to use this process.

Research a topic and then align with one side. Gather points and counter-points in preparation for building a thesis.

Gather sources

Mark two or three main points that best captures the message of the text
  - Sufficient evidence
  - Examine, sort, prioritize ideas

Determine validity of source
  - Credibility of author/source
  - Purpose of text
  - Identify existing biases
Getting Started: AzMERIT
For AzMERIT, students are provided with sources so they need to read or listen to the passages and gather points and counter-points in preparation for building a thesis.

It is up to students if they create a rough draft on paper or begin composing and editing directly on the computer.

The suggested total time for all three ELA sessions is 2 and ¼ to 4 hours. ADE suggests 75 minutes for Part 1 and Part 2 of the test and 90 minutes for the Writing session. For the last two years, the average time for writing has been 75-80 minutes across the grade levels.

Some students require an additional 30 minutes to an hour for writing and 30 minutes per reading tests. For those students, 5-6 hours for all three sessions may be appropriate if they are working productively.

If you look at the table, you will see the total time that students in grades 3-8 took for the Spring 2018 ELA test. As you see, the average time of students is in alignment with the recommended time. The last column shows the maximum time that a class took for the ELA test. Notice that these are three and a half to four times the state average and are concerning. AzMERIT Writing is an on-demand sample of student’s ability to listen or read a passage and respond.
to a prompt using evidence from the passages. You can prepare students during instruction by providing time expectations for your students. You might want to start by using one passage and a prompt and build up to using two or more passages or sources (maps, picture, ad, audio, etc.).

The writing session of AzMERIT measures many of the writing standards – producing clear and coherent writing (Standard 4), gather relevant information from print and digital sources (Standard 8), draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (Standard 9) – but also requires writing over a single setting of 90 minutes.

In our documents for District Test Coordinators and Test Administrators, we write that students must complete the test session by the end of the school day. We recommend that you schedule adequate time for test sessions, particularly those starting in the afternoon, that a student or two who is working productively and may need an additional half hour to work can finish before the end of the regular school day.

Remember that AzMERIT testing should mimic classroom instruction and students should complete the
writing and reading sessions within the allocated timeframe just as they are expected to complete classroom assignments within the ELA block of time.

Slide 12

Remind students to include proper citation with any outside evidence, even if they have paraphrased or summarized the work.

Slide 13

Please remind students that without proper citation, a paraphrased sentence or paragraph could be construed as plagiarism.
Summarizing*: Students will often write essays summarizing the information outlined in each of the provided texts. Remind students that an evidence-based essay isn’t about the texts. It’s about the student’s point of view and analysis; the texts are only there to provide support.

This means no information from the text should be included unless it helps further the student’s overall argument or point.

Natural Evidence - When done correctly, if you were to remove the quotation marks, you should not be able to tell where your words end and the evidence begins. This technique strengthens your writing, and it is the preferred method in college.
Many people ask us the requirements in AzMERIT for citing sources. There is an expectation that students reference the text but there is not a specific method for doing this. Here are some ideas for citing evidence in writing.

Remind students prior to testing to continue to use whichever method they use regularly during instruction. Also remind students that to receive a score, at least 30% of their response must be original text, so only 70% can be quotes or paraphrasing from the passages or prompt.

Please contact us at AzMERIT@azed.gov if you have any questions.