

Innovation Lab Network Performance Assessment Project
Quality Criteria for Performance Assessments
Should Animals Be Kept in Zoos?

Quality Criteria	Yes	Yes, with Slight Modifications	No	Rationale/Suggestions
1. Focus on Deeper Learning				
a. Does the task require the demonstration and/or application of complex skills (e.g., Critical Abilities, DOK Levels 3 and 4, 21 st century skills, Key Cognitive Strategies)?*	✓			The task is to make a claim about whether animals should be placed in zoos, and to cite evidence in order to support their arguments. This task requires the demonstration of several critical abilities, including Analysis of Information and Communication in Many Forms (specifically writing).
b. Can students' responses to this task (what students are asked to produce) provide evidence of important college/career readiness skills and Critical Abilities (e.g., collaboration, research skills, evidence-based communication)?*	✓			The students' written responses provide evidence of their ability to analyze information from a variety of sources, and their ability to use evidence from different sides of a debate to construct a well-formed argument. Furthermore, the writing process involves the analysis and organization of evidence, crafting an introductory paragraph and supporting paragraphs, and a thorough revision process. The product of this process provides evidence of skills such as collaboration and evidence-based communication.
c. Does the task address key concepts and skills in the discipline that are transferable to other contexts?*	✓			The tension between the positive and negative ways that humans interact with the natural world is a concept that is transferable to many other contexts in environmental and life science. Additionally, the skills involved in constructing an argument based on multiple sources of evidence are transferable to other contexts in science and non-science disciplines.
2. Alignment to Standards				
a. Does the task measure key skills and major claims emphasized by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and/or NGSS? *		✓		Common Core standards are listed. There are some core content standards listed for science, but it is unclear which set of standards these refer to. Although the science content of the task focuses on human impacts on the environment, and it is suggested that the task be used for grades 3/4, the NGSS do not have any related content standards aligned to grades 3 and 4 (or even 2 and 5). However, there are NGSS standards that relate to human impacts on the living world. Specifically, in middle school students are expected to know these disciplinary core ideas: LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystems are dynamic in nature; their characteristics can vary over time. Disruptions to any physical or biological component of an ecosystem can lead to

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				shifts in all its populations. (MS-LS2-4)
b. Can students' responses to this task (what students are asked to produce) be scored using CCSS/NGSS aligned rubrics? *	✓			The written responses can be scored using rubrics that assess CCSS writing standards, as well as NGSS content knowledge.
c. Are the scoring criteria--rubrics, point scoring systems, checklists (if provided)--aligned to key expectations of the CCSS/NGSS?		✓		The provided rubric is aligned to the CCSS standards being assessed, but there is only a vague criterion for content knowledge. The content-related criterion should be revised to be more specific to the content knowledge expected in the responses.
d. Is the rigor of the task appropriately matched to the grade-level standards being assessed?		✓		The task is appropriately matched to be accessible for grades 3 and 4, but it could also be well-suited to middle school since the content more aptly matches middle school NGSS standards.
3. Student Choice and Agency				
a. Does the task allow for a variety of responses and/or solution pathways? *	✓			There is not one specific answer or way to draw upon evidence in supporting a claim. There are many ways that students can respond to the task prompt.
b. Does the task offer opportunities for student ownership and student choice (e.g., selecting a research question or topic; selecting sources; etc.)?	✓			Students may choose which pieces of evidence they can use to craft an argument, and they may choose which side of the debate they stand on.
c. Does the task require student-initiated planning and management of information/data and ideas (e.g., determining strategies for solving a problem; designing an investigation; deciding how to present findings; etc.)?	✓			Students will have many pieces of evidence to organize into a cohesive argument. While there are some graphic organizers and other writing tools provided, it is still up to the students to decide how to present their arguments and evidence.
4. Relevance and Authenticity				
a. Is task content represented in a way that is appropriately authentic (i.e., not overly hypothetical), relevant (i.e., relatable), and/or meaningful to students and the discipline (e.g., topic connects to students' lives, task simulates authentic purpose and audience)? *	✓			Many students likely have experience with zoos, and will find the ethical consideration of zoos interesting and relevant to their experiences. The impact that humans have on nature is also meaningful to the discipline of life science, so this task will lay a foundation for students to begin thinking about the impacts that humans have on the natural world.
b. Is the task related to real world problems, contexts, and/or purposes?	✓			Zoos have existed for a long time and will continue to be a part of our world, so the conversation about the ethical aspects of zoos will continue to be important.

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5. Suitable for Diverse Student Populations				
a. Is the task, at its core, free of bias that might disadvantage specific student populations and free of stereotypes in language, content, and design? *	✓			The only disadvantage some students may have is a lack of experience with zoos, but there are numerous videos and articles that help students understand many different aspects of the zoo experience.
b. Does the task include, or allow for the use of, a variety of stimuli?	✓			There are numerous videos and readings that give students different perspectives on zoos through multiple kinds of media.
c. Does the task provide instructional scaffolds to support student learning and skill development toward successful completion of the task?		✓		Instructional scaffolds provided are thorough. However, there are no directions provided on how to use a four-square organizer. It is listed on page 12 with the directions “provide and teach the four-square graphic organizer.” This aspect of the instructional scaffolds needs to be clarified.
d. Does the task include appropriate recommendations for accommodations and differentiation to provide access for diverse students?		✓		There are many elements of the instructional scaffolds that function as supports for students with diverse needs, such as pair-share and partner work, color-coding with highlighters, use of graphic organizers, and peer feedback on writing. However, these recommendations are embedded throughout the instructional scaffolds and are not marked as supports or accommodations for diverse student needs. This could be improved by creating a separate section for accommodations.
6. Design of Student Task				
a. Is the overall task prompt clear (e.g., clear student directions, unambiguous graphics)? *	✓			The prompt is clear: to take a stance about the ethics of zoos and back up the claim with evidence.
b. Is task information presented in an organized way?		✓		Overall the task information is very organized, but there are several materials embedded throughout the instructional scaffolds that are not listed with the texts on page 5. These include the 4-square organizer, plus-delta organizers, and a text about informative organization. These texts should likely also be listed along with the other materials required for the task.
7. Curriculum-Embedded				
a. Is the task feasible for most school/classroom environments (e.g., access to necessary resources)?	✓			The task requires access to printing and projection software for YouTube videos.
b. Does the task include opportunities for independent work as well as interaction/collaboration with peers?	✓			While the task response is individually written, there are multiple opportunities for class discussion and partner work, including pair-share and peer feedback on writing.

Task Materials	Yes	No	Comments
a. Is the task missing any referenced accompanying materials (resources, handouts, rubrics etc.)? If yes, please indicate which materials are missing.		✓	
b. Does this task contain topics/materials/texts that might be sensitive for some students? If yes, please explain.		✓	

Comments: Overall the task is a strong example of writing an evidence-based argument, which involves critical abilities and 21st century skills.

There are a few minor suggested changes:

- the task needs to list the appropriate NGSS content standards, and perhaps be realigned to the grade level in which those particular standards are included according to the new organization of standards (middle school instead of 3/4);
- the rubric needs to include more specific content criteria;
- the instructional scaffolds need to be adjusted to include a separate section for accommodations and to give clearer directions on the four-square organizer;
- and the graphic organizers embedded throughout the instructional scaffolds should also be listed alongside the other texts on page 5.

Criteria summarized in this document were derived from the following sources:

- *Quality Criteria for Performance Assessments*, SCALE, 2013
- *Criteria for High-Quality Assessment*, SCOPE, CRESST, LSRI, June 2013
- *Quality Performance Assessment: Harnessing the Power of Teacher and Student Learning*, Brown & Mevs, February 2012
- *ThinkReady Task Review Checklist*, 2013