Rationale

This lesson serves as an overview of the prose constructed response (PCR) of the Research Simulation Task (RST), which is the essay writing portion of the exam. The succeeding lessons in this series will delve into several aspects of the writing process and offer practice in the areas of thesis statements, outlining, paragraphing, and completing a PCR task.

Goal

To preview the PCR on the PARCC Research Simulation Task

Task Foci

**CCSS W.3.1**: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

**CCSS W.3.2**: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Objectives

Students will understand the types of writing that they will be asked to produce on PARCC Research Simulation Task.

Materials

- Research Simulation Task Sample Texts
- Research Simulation Task Sample Prompt
- Blank white paper
- Colored pencils

Procedures

Explain that today you are going to introduce the class to the writing portion of the PARCC Research Simulation Task.

The great innovation of PARCC is that it creates a test-taking environment that simulates the circumstances in which real-world writing is conducted. Students have the texts they need right in front of them. Share this information with students. Let them know that this should put them more at ease with the tests. The only prior knowledge they need concerns knowing how to write a response to a prompt. The content of their responses will be drawn exclusively from the texts on the assessment.

Explain to students that PARCC is a significantly different test than NJ ASK, but you as the teacher are going to guide them through the process of taking the test so that they are well prepared for test day.
Differences from NJ ASK:
  ◦ Test is administered on computers (schools may opt for paper tests).
  ◦ The writing and reading portions are combined into one comprehensive assessment. All answers, selected or written, use the same set of texts as their source, so students interact with the texts over a sustained period of time.
  ◦ Questions are all text-dependent. Students answer multiple-choice (EBSR & TECR) questions after reading the texts and before writing their essays.
  ◦ Emphasis on analytical essay.

Distribute the sample texts and prompt.
Ask students if they have any questions.
Discuss “main idea” and explain to students that the main idea of their essay will be a statement that directly answers the prompt.
Next, students will create a web to brainstorm main ideas and supporting evidence.
Pass out paper and colored pencils.
Ask students to write the words “Main Idea” in the center of their paper and leave space to write their main idea below the words.
Direct students to come up with at least three supporting ideas. Have them find information in the texts that they can use to support their ideas. Have them write their findings in their own words on their web.
Discuss students’ ideas and findings if there is time. Collect their work.

**Teacher Tips**
While students are creating their webs, circulate to help any students who may be struggling and to check that their main idea is workable and that they are finding relevant information in the texts to support their ideas.

**Extension Activities**
Evaluate students’ webs. It should be evident that the student understood the reading. Check that each student was able to come up with at least three supporting ideas for their main idea.
Feelin’ Frazzled?
CDC.gov, adapted by Laura Schaefer

1. Finding yourself in a hectic situation, whether it's forgetting your homework or missing your ride home, can really stress you out. Are you looking for a safety net for those days that seem to get worse by the second? Could you really use some advice on how to de-stress both your body and your mind? Knowing how to deal can be half the battle. Check out these tips to keep you cool, calm, and collected:

2. **Put your body in motion.**
Moving from the chair to the couch while watching TV is not being physically active! Physical activity is one of the most important ways to keep stress away by clearing your head and lifting your spirits. Physical activity also increases the natural "feel-good" chemicals in the body which leave you with a naturally happy feeling. Whether you like games of football, tennis, or roller hockey, or you prefer walks with family and friends, it's important to get up, get out, and get moving!

3. **Fuel up.**
Start your day off with a full tank. Eating breakfast will give you the energy you need to tackle the day. Eating regular meals and taking time to enjoy them will make you feel better too. This means no skipping dinner.

   Make sure to fuel up with fruits, vegetables, and proteins like peanut butter, a chicken sandwich, or a tuna salad. Add in some grains such as wheat bread, pasta, or crackers. These will give you the power you need to make it through those hectic days.

   Don't be fooled by the jolt of energy you get from sodas and sugary snacks. This only lasts a short time, and once it wears off, you may feel **sluggish** and more tired than usual. For that extra boost of energy to sail through history notes, math class, and after-school activities, grab a banana, some string cheese, or a granola bar for some power-packed energy.

4. **LOL!**
Some say that laughter is the best medicine. Well, in many cases, it is! Did you know that it takes 15 facial muscles to laugh? Lots of laughing can make you feel good. And, that good feeling can stay with you even after the laughter stops. So, head off stress with regular doses of laughter by watching a funny movie or cartoons, reading a joke book, or even make up your own riddles. Laughter can make you feel like a new person! Everyone has those days when they do something really silly or stupid. Instead of getting upset with yourself, laugh out loud! No one's perfect! Life should be about having fun. So, lighten up!

5. **Have fun with friends.**
Being with people you like is always a good way to ditch your stress. Get a group together to go to the movies, shoot some hoops, or play a board game. Or, just hang out and talk. Friends can help you work through your problems and let you see the brighter side of things.

6. **Talk it out.**
Instead of keeping your feelings bottled up inside, talk to someone you trust or respect about what's bothering you. It could be a friend, a parent, someone in your family, or a teacher. Talking out your problems and seeing them from a different view might help you figure out ways to deal with them. Just remember, you don't have to go it alone.
Don’t Stress!
CDC.gov, adapted by Laura Schaefer

1. Don't sweat the small stuff! Remember, you're not alone. Everyone has stresses in their lives. It's up to you to choose how to deal with them.

2. **Take time to chill.**
   Pick a comfy spot to sit and read, daydream, or even take a snooze. Listen to your favorite music. Work on a relaxing project like putting together a puzzle or making jewelry. Stress can sometimes make you feel like a tight rubber band stretched to the limit! If this happens, take a few deep breaths to help yourself unwind. If you're in the middle of an impossible homework problem, take a break! Finding time to relax after a hectic day or week can make all the difference.

3. **Catch some zzzzz...**
   **Fatigue** is a best friend to stress. When you don't get enough sleep, it's hard to deal. You may feel tired, cranky, or you may have trouble thinking clearly. When you're overtired, a problem may seem much bigger than it actually is. You may have a hard time doing a school assignment that usually seems easy. You don't do your best in sports or any physical activity. You may have an argument with your friends over something really stupid.

   Sleep is a big deal! Getting the right amount of sleep is especially important for kids your age. Your body (and mind) is changing and developing. It requires more sleep to re-charge for the next day. So don't resist, hit the hay!

4. **Keep a journal.**
   If you're having one of those crazy days when nothing goes right, it's a good idea to write things down in a journal to get it off of your chest. Write about how you feel, what's going on in your life, and things you'd like to get done. You could even write down what you do when you're faced with a stressful situation. Then, look back and think about how you handled it later. Find a quiet spot, grab a notebook and pen, and start writing!

   **Get it together.**
   Too much to do but not enough time? Forgot your homework? Feeling overwhelmed? Being unprepared for school, practice, or other activities can make for a very stressful day. Getting everything done can be a challenge, but all you have to do is plan a little and get organized.

5. **Lend a hand.**
   Get involved in an activity that helps others. It's almost impossible to feel stressed out when you're helping someone else. It's also a great way to find out about yourself and the special qualities you never knew you had! Signing up for a service project is a good idea, but helping others is as easy as saying hello, holding a door, or volunteering to keep a neighbor's pet. If you want to get involved in a more organized volunteer program, try working at a local recreation center, or helping with an after-school program. The feeling you will get from helping others is greater than you can imagine!
Prose Constructed Response
You have read two articles about tips for dealing with stress. Write an essay about dealing with stress using information from the two articles. What different advice does each article give you? Which advice is the most helpful and why? Make sure you use specific details from both articles.