

Part One Sample Questions and Written Assignments

This section is designed to assist you in responding to the multiple-choice questions and written assignments on Part One of the assessment.

Included in this section are:

- Sample multiple-choice questions
- Annotated answer key for the sample multiple-choice questions
- Sample directions for the written assignments
- Sample written assignments
- An example of a strong response to each sample assignment
- An evaluation of the strong response to each sample assignment
- Scoring criteria that will be used in evaluating your response to each assignment

The sample multiple-choice questions are designed to illustrate the nature of the test questions. Work through the questions carefully before referring to the annotated answer key, which follows the sample multiple-choice questions. The answer key provides the correct response to each question, describes why each correct response is the best answer, and lists the objective within the assessment framework to which each question is linked.

For each sample assignment, you may want to take the following steps to prepare for the test:

- Review the directions for the written assignments.
- Read the assignment.
- Prepare your response to the assignment. It is suggested that you type your response to the assignment without using editorial tools, such as spell check and grammar check, in order to simulate the actual testing experience. These tools will not be available to you during the test session.
- After you complete the assignment, review the sample strong response, your response, the scoring criteria, and the evaluation of the sample strong response.

QUESTIONS

1. When promoting from within to fill a leadership position in a school district, the school district business leader should give strongest consideration to individuals who have:
 - A. shown the ability to communicate effectively with others.
 - B. been employed for an extended period of time by the school district.
 - C. exhibited a high level of personal ambition in their careers.
 - D. demonstrated assertiveness in their personal interactions with others.

2. One of the goals in a school district's new vision calls for integrating computer technology into all content-area instruction. The school district business leader is most likely to be responsible for preparing which of the following pieces of information that is related to achieving this goal?
 - A. a list of the short- and long-term benchmarks that should be met to implement the goal successfully
 - B. a summary of the reasons why this particular goal is important and educationally relevant for the district's students
 - C. a list of the resources needed to implement the goal and their possible sources
 - D. a summary of the strategies that should be used to engage stakeholders in the process of implementing the goal

Use the information below to answer the two questions that follow.

Voters in a school district are engaged in a spirited debate about the upcoming vote on passing the district's budget. The superintendent has organized a number of public forums to discuss issues relating to the vote. At one forum, the school district business leader is to give a presentation about district finances and then answer questions from the audience. The audience will include both citizens who support passage of the budget and citizens who oppose the measure.

3. During the presentation it would be most important for the business leader to:
 - A. refrain from presenting material from budgets of previous administrations.
 - B. minimize the use of charts or graphs to present financial data.
 - C. refrain from discussing actual figures for anticipated revenues or expenditures.
 - D. minimize the use of acronyms or technical language.
4. The district contains a large Spanish-speaking community, many of whose members do not speak fluent English. Members of this community have been actively involved in the debate about the upcoming vote and the business leader expects that many will attend the forum. Which of the following is the most appropriate way for the business leader to ensure that these individuals can fully participate in the forum?
 - A. Meet with leaders of the Spanish-speaking community before the forum to assure them that all constituents will be welcome to speak during the event.
 - B. Provide a Spanish-language translator at district expense to translate the forum proceedings for members of the Spanish-speaking community.
 - C. Ask a member of the Spanish-speaking community who is fluent in English to summarize the proceedings for other members of his or her community.
 - D. Take time periodically during the forum to ask specifically for comments from members of the Spanish-speaking community.

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5. It would be most important for a school district business leader to implement changes in business office procedures slowly and gradually when the changes in procedures are likely to:
- A. cause minimal disruption in the functioning of the office.
 - B. require capital expenditures to implement.
 - C. cause considerable anxiety among staff.
 - D. require staff to take part in decision making during the change.
6. Compared with implementation of tactical plans, implementation of strategic plans is likely to:
- A. require less input of district financial resources.
 - B. involve greater transformation of the district's long-term goals.
 - C. require less stakeholder input into decision making.
 - D. be more affected by local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

ANNOTATED ANSWER KEY

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
1	A	Effective leaders in the educational environment are individuals who can motivate, inspire, and persuade others to act as a team to help achieve school goals. School leaders must be skilled communicators who can work effectively with disparate constituencies to forge compromises, help reach consensus, and mediate disputes. Therefore, when considering applicants from within the system to fill a leadership position, the school district business leader should place the highest priority on the quality of the communication skills a given individual would bring to the job.	0001
2	C	Although a school district business leader may perform a variety of tasks, his or her responsibilities relate primarily to school or district finances. Thus, business leaders are much more likely to determine the costs to the district of implementing a new program than to assess the program's educational relevance, publicize the program to stakeholders, or develop criteria for evaluating the program's success.	0002
3	D	School district business leaders may be asked to give presentations about school finances to a variety of audiences. To be effective, such presentations must be developed with an eye to the specific audience to be addressed. For example, in the situation described, the presentation is being given to an audience of district citizens, most of whom will not be familiar with specialized terminology related to budgets and financing. For such an audience, it would be important to minimize the use of acronyms (e.g., PILOT for payments in lieu of taxes) and technical language.	0003
4	B	When a vote on the budget of a school district is scheduled, all registered voters in the district have the right and responsibility to vote on the issue. If the district presents supplemental information to the voters through public forums, it has a responsibility to make the information equally available to all potential voters. In the situation described, the best way to ensure that Spanish-speaking members of the community will have equal access to the information is to provide a Spanish-language translator at district expense.	0004

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5	C	<p>The timing and pace of change in a business office can play a significant role in how easily change is accepted by staff members. The replacement of familiar procedures with new and unfamiliar practices may require changes in roles and responsibilities and will almost certainly cause some anxiety on the part of employees. Rapid, large-scale changes are especially likely to produce stress as staff members struggle to cope with a steep learning curve. Conversely, anxiety can be reduced by implementing changes gradually and ensuring that employees have time to adjust to each change before proceeding to implement further changes.</p>	0005
6	B	<p>Tactical plans involve taking action to achieve short-term objectives or to respond to a particular event or circumstance. In the context of education, tactical plans may be required, for example, to deal with an unexpected increase in the price of heating oil or the loss of an anticipated grant. In contrast, strategic plans focus on achieving long-term objectives and almost always require some adjustment of the system as a whole. For example, one element of a district's strategic plan might focus on improving science instruction over the next five years by shifting a greater proportion of district resources into hiring more science teachers and constructing new science labs.</p>	0006

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

A sample of the directions for the written assignments is shown in the box below.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

This section of the test consists of two written assignments. Assignment One is a Work Product assignment and Assignment Two is a Case Study assignment. You are to prepare a written response of about 150–300 words to Assignment One and a written response of about 300–600 words to Assignment Two. Approximately 50% of your total test score is derived from the written assignments—approximately 17% from Assignment One, and approximately 33% from Assignment Two. You may complete the assignments in either order, and you may return to either assignment as time permits.

Read each assignment carefully before you type. Each written assignment appears on the screen with an answer box immediately below the assignment. Type your response in this answer box. For some written assignments, you may need to use the scroll bar to view the entire assignment. As with the multiple-choice questions, you may select written assignments for review later during the testing time.

Your response to each assignment will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- **PURPOSE:** Fulfill the charge of the assignment.
- **APPLICATION OF CONTENT:** Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.
- **SUPPORT:** Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Your responses will be evaluated on the criteria above, not on writing ability. However, your responses must be communicated clearly enough to permit valid judgment of your knowledge and skills. Your responses should conform to the conventions of edited American English. This should be your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work.

Be sure to write about the assigned topics. You may not use any reference materials during the test. In order to maintain your anonymity during the scoring process, do not type your name in any portion of the answer box. Remember to review what you have written and make any changes that you think will improve your responses.

SAMPLE WORK PRODUCT ASSIGNMENT

Subarea: Supporting the District Educational Vision

Assignment One: Work Product

Use the information below to complete the task that follows.

You are the business leader of a school district in which district stakeholders have recently collaborated in the development of a new district vision. One important goal associated with the new vision is to meet the diverse educational needs of individual learners, particularly in the early grades. One proposed strategy for achieving this goal is to reduce class sizes in the district's elementary schools. The rationale is that smaller classes, along with differentiated instruction, will help teachers address the needs of individual students.

All of the elementary school buildings in the district are in reasonably good condition, and the student population is distributed relatively evenly throughout the district. Districtwide the average class size is 20 students for grades K–3 and 24 students for grades 4–5. The district governing body is considering a proposal by the district's Shared-Decision-Making Committee to limit class size for grades K–3 to 16 students and to limit class size for grades 4–5 to 20 students. These limits would apply to all elementary schools in the district and would require increasing the number of classes and adding instructional staff.

The superintendent asks you to provide some preliminary information about the possible effects on district finances of the proposed reductions in elementary class sizes.

Task

Write a memorandum of about 150–300 words that effectively communicates to the superintendent the financial implications of the proposed reductions in elementary class sizes. This memorandum may be shared with other district stakeholders. State any assumptions you are making. In your memo:

- explain how implementing the proposal to reduce elementary class sizes is likely to affect the district's long- and short-term financial planning and why; and
- describe the types of data that would be useful in quantifying costs associated with the proposal to reduce elementary class sizes, and explain how those data would be useful.

■ **Strong Response to the Sample Work Product Assignment**

(Assumptions: 1. Configuration of elementary schools will remain K–5. 2. Student enrollment at each school and in the district overall is predicted to remain relatively stable.)

Re: Financial implications of proposed reductions in elementary class sizes

Implementing this proposal to reduce class sizes will require expanding classroom space and hiring more faculty and staff.

New classroom space could be created by renovating some buildings (e.g., partitioning one classroom into two), constructing new classroom wings, or leasing portable classrooms. Costs to the district may be significant for each of these options. Start-up costs for each option (e.g., planning, obtaining permits, preparing bids) may have an additional impact on district finances in the short term. Renovation or new construction would likely require passing a bond issue, which would increase long-term debt, while leasing portable classrooms would require absorbing yearly leasing costs into future budgets.

The district will need to hire additional faculty, and possibly additional aides, specialists, and custodians, to accommodate a larger number of smaller classes. Additional staff will increase district expenditures on salaries and benefits. These costs are likely to increase over time as newly hired staff accumulate service time.

Comparing each school's current capacity with its current enrollment will enable planners to estimate how much increased capacity will be necessary to reduce class size to the target level. The projected costs of renovation, new construction, and leasing can then be compared by collecting pertinent data (e.g., costs of demolition, disposal, possible asbestos abatement, debt service, architects' fees, materials, labor, leasing portable classrooms). State construction aid should also be estimated for both the renovation and new construction options.

The first step in evaluating staffing needs should be to compare current teacher/aide/student ratios with the proposed ratio by grade level and school. It is necessary to know the current size of the custodial staff in each school to project custodial needs under various scenarios. Collecting information on salary and benefit levels for a variety of step levels for new staff will help project staffing costs to the district.

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■ Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Work Product Assignment

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

The response states two assumptions made by the writer (i.e., configuration of elementary schools will remain K-5 and student enrollment at each school and in the district overall will remain relatively stable). The response explains how implementing this proposal will affect district finances in the short term (e.g., start-up costs) and in the long term (e.g., increased long-term debt, increased district expenditures on salaries and benefits) and explains why these effects will occur (i.e., need for more classroom space and need for more staff). The response describes types of data needed to quantify these costs and explains how those data would be useful (e.g., current teacher/aide/student ratios and number of custodial staff will help determine how many additional staff will be needed, estimated renovation/construction costs can be compared to cost of leasing portable classrooms).

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates a highly effective application of the knowledge of how to support and sustain the district educational vision by accurately aligning financial considerations with the vision (e.g., smaller classes will require more staff and more space, costs of new staff are likely to increase over time as newly hired staff accumulate service time). The response demonstrates an understanding of methods for providing accurate financial information that can be shared with stakeholders in order to promote effective decision making (e.g., "Collecting information on salary and benefit levels for a variety of step levels for new staff will help project staffing costs to the district").

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

The response supports key ideas with relevant examples. For example, the idea of the need for renovation or new construction is supported with a concise description of the possibilities (e.g., partitioning one classroom into two, constructing new classroom wings). Sound reasoning supports the response throughout (e.g., reductions in class size will necessitate more staff and more space; more space may necessitate renovation, which requires demolition and disposal; renovation costs can be compared to cost of leasing).

SAMPLE CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT**Subarea: Supporting Change and Sustainability in the District****Assignment Two: Case Study**

Read the case study that follows; then write a response. The case study provides information about all relevant activities that occurred in the situation described. Citing specific evidence from the information provided, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you:

- describe what the school district business leader did well in this situation;
- describe what the school district business leader did poorly or failed to do in this situation; and
- identify and discuss three important actions that the school district business leader should take to correct things that he did poorly or failed to do, and explain why each of these actions is likely to be effective.

Case Study

For 19 years the Atwater School District was led by the same superintendent who handled all district budgeting, financial management, district and state reporting, and grant development. Three veteran bookkeepers and an administrative assistant provided the superintendent with central office support. This superintendent has recently retired, and the new superintendent, Dr. Marisa Henderson, has recommended that the district hire a school district business leader, Mr. John Powell, to oversee the operational and financial affairs of the district. In an April meeting with Mr. Powell, Dr. Henderson asks him to explore ways to modernize the district business office. "We need to have these changes well under way before the start of the next school year," the superintendent explains. "The district has already committed \$30,000 for the first year of the upgrade."

Mr. Powell first conducts a thorough study of the current operation of the business office. He interviews all members of the office about their current responsibilities and finds that each staff member has an assigned area of expertise. One bookkeeper is responsible for payroll and personnel, while the others handle accounts payable and accounts receivable. The administrative assistant handles most word processing and other secretarial duties and serves as a receptionist for visitors to the office. Mr. Powell observes that, although staff seem to take pride in their work, they show little awareness of the duties of other staff and how the business office operates as a whole. To remedy this, Mr. Powell organizes several mandatory in-services focusing on the role of the school business office in school district administration, and the goals and objectives of district business management. He also asks each staff member to train other staff members in his or her area of expertise.

Mr. Powell notes that the computers in the business office are not networked and run different programs. This incompatibility often leads to duplication of effort and records, as each employee enters and maintains his or her own data. In addition, computer hardware and peripheral equipment are several years old and the various software programs that the office uses are not the most recent versions. Accordingly, Mr. Powell decides to

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investigate replacing the hardware and many of the peripherals with faster and more versatile equipment, and standardizing the programs by purchasing the most recent version of business office software packages that is available. He also decides to network the business office computers, which will allow office workers to share data, reduce duplication of effort, and increase efficiency.

Mr. Powell meets with business office staff at the end of the school year in June to announce the coming changes and request feedback. During the meeting, Mr. Powell emphasizes the advantages of using newer equipment and software and networking the office's computers. Several staff members express reservations about the plan and their ability to smoothly transition from the old to the new system. Mr. Powell reassures them that the new system will be easy to use and that the vendor will provide technical support and assistance to any staff member who requests it.

During the summer, Mr. Powell consults with school business leaders of neighboring districts about the systems that they use in their business offices. Mr. Powell is particularly enthusiastic about the system used by the business leader of the Coulter School District, a district that borders Atwater. He contacts the vendors that provided Coulter's system and asks them to supply further information about their products and estimates for adapting the system used in Coulter to Atwater's needs. After meeting several times with the vendors, Mr. Powell assures them that he will approve contracts with them for upgrading and networking all systems in the Atwater business office. He calculates that the total cost of the changes will be \$147,000, and in early August he writes a memo to the superintendent asking her to place an item on the agenda for the September 1 meeting of the Atwater district governing body asking for approval to transfer this amount from available funds.

Mr. Powell then meets with the members of the business office staff to inform them that a new system has been selected and will be fully operational by the end of October. Mr. Powell gives them manuals and other training material provided by the vendors and suggests that they use the time before the system is installed to familiarize themselves with all aspects of system requirements and operations. Two members of the staff express considerable reservations about their ability to cope with the changes in such a short time and request that the new system be phased in gradually over the course of the school year. Mr. Powell offers them encouragement and expresses confidence in their ability to learn the new system, but says that he wants all the changes to be made as soon as possible.

Dr. Henderson, who had been on vacation, returns to Atwater in mid-August and calls Mr. Powell to request that they meet as soon as possible. She asks Mr. Powell to prepare a progress report of his plans to modernize the business office and e-mail it to her before the meeting, and Mr. Powell agrees to do so. In his report, Mr. Powell emphasizes the inefficient and disorganized nature of the district business office as it now operates and contrasts it with the well-run Coulter business office. He summarizes the features of the proposed new system and emphasizes the quality of the products and the vendors' reputation for service. He estimates that the system can be fully operational by the end of October and states that he sees no major problem with the ability of the business office staff to adjust to the changes.

■ Strong Response to the Sample Case Study Assignment

Mr. Powell did several things well in his effort to modernize the district business office. Conducting a thorough study of the office's current operations and interviewing staff members about their current responsibilities was an effective way to begin. He diagnosed weaknesses of the current system (e.g., compartmentalization, lack of a computer network, inefficiency) and suggested effective solutions (e.g., upgrading equipment and software, networking the office). He recognized the importance of involving stakeholders by requesting feedback, offering encouragement, and discussing goals and objectives with staff. He also conducted research by consulting with other district business leaders and meeting with vendors to discuss adapting the Coulter system to Atwater.

On the other hand, Mr. Powell did a number of things poorly. Most notably, he exceeded his authority by informing contractors that he would approve contracts with them without mentioning anything about a bid process and by developing a proposal that far exceeded the budget. Mr. Powell showed poor judgment by minimizing staff concerns to the superintendent and by failing to take seriously staff concerns about adapting to the new system. He exhibited weak management skills by failing to follow through on staff feedback, failing to plan for adequate staff support and training, and planning insufficient time to implement changes. In addition, Mr. Powell's emphasis on the inefficient and disorganized nature of the business office would likely cause further resentment on the part of staff. Finally, Mr. Powell failed to recognize his responsibility to consult regularly with the superintendent. His failure to communicate with Dr. Henderson, coupled with his request for quick approval of his proposed expenditure, could lead to a confrontation with the superintendent that could make it difficult to establish a good working relationship in the future.

Mr. Powell should begin to rectify his mistakes by taking steps to involve the superintendent in the process. Mr. Powell must recognize that he is an advisor to the superintendent and the governing body and does not have the power to implement costly changes without their approval. Specifically, he should immediately withdraw his request that the governing body quickly consider his proposal to spend \$147,000 on modernizing the business office. He should then work with the superintendent to develop a clear, written plan for modernizing the business office that includes identification of steps in the process and a timeline for implementing changes. This would provide a realistic outline of how modernization efforts should proceed that is supported by the superintendent and should also help Mr. Powell develop a good working relationship with the superintendent.

Second, Mr. Powell should immediately contact the vendors he talked with previously and remind them that all contracts must go through the bidding process and be approved by the district governing body. He should then develop clear, explicit criteria for choosing equipment, software, and a service provider. Rather than simply using Coulter's system as a model, he should analyze what makes it effective, and use that analysis to help design a system that meets Atwater's needs. He should then provide a number of specific options for purchases, including a discussion of the costs and benefits for each option, and make recommendations based on how well each option fits Atwater's needs. This will give Dr. Henderson and the governing body the information they need to make decisions about purchasing and allocating funds.

Third, Mr. Powell should take steps to repair his relationship with his staff and bring them fully into the process. He should meet with staff again to hear their concerns about the changes and should follow up with focused staff training, including cross-training. He should take steps to minimize stress that the staff might experience during the transition. Above all, he should communicate with staff regularly to keep them informed, hear their concerns, and receive their suggestions. Involving staff in the change process will improve morale, give staff a sense of ownership of the changes, and reduce anxiety.

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■ Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Case Study Assignment

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

The response describes what the school district business leader did well (e.g., conducted a thorough study of current operations, diagnosed weaknesses, conducted research) and what the school district business leader did poorly (e.g., exceeded his authority, failed to plan for adequate staff support and training, failed to consult regularly with the superintendent). The response identifies and discusses three important actions the business leader should take and explains why each action will be effective (e.g., involving the superintendent in planning will help ensure her support, providing information about costs and benefits of specific purchase options will help the superintendent and governing body make decisions about purchasing and allocating funds, communicating effectively and regularly with staff will promote a sense of ownership and help reduce stress and anxiety associated with change).

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates a highly effective application of knowledge regarding the process of change and its relationship to district financial management and planning. For example, the response reflects an understanding of appropriate steps in the change process (e.g., diagnosing weaknesses, conducting research to determine alternatives) and the importance of involving and communicating effectively with all relevant stakeholders when contemplating major changes. The response also indicates recognition of appropriate roles and responsibilities of relevant staff in planning for change and an understanding of steps in decision-making processes related to the acquisition of new technologies.

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

The response supports key ideas with relevant examples. For example, the idea of developing a clear written plan is supported with a description of the contents of such a plan (e.g., identification of steps in the process, timeline for implementing changes). The response indicates an understanding of effective management by accurately identifying examples of Mr. Powell's limitations in that area (e.g., not following through on staff feedback, failing to plan for adequate support and training, allowing insufficient time to implement change). The response shows sound reasoning throughout (e.g., linking the creation of explicit criteria for purchasing decisions and the provision of options to decision makers' ability to identify the best options, explaining how development of a plan can promote a good working relationship with the superintendent).

CRITERIA FOR SCORING THE RESPONSE

Each response will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

PURPOSE:	Fulfill the charge of the assignment.
APPLICATION OF CONTENT:	Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.
SUPPORT:	Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Each response is rated on a four-point scale. The four score points of the score scale correspond to varying degrees of performance that are related to the above criteria.

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	<p>The "4" response reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task. • The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.
3	<p>The "3" response reflects a general command of the relevant knowledge and skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response generally fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding to the given task. • The response demonstrates a generally accurate and effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides support with some relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning.
2	<p>The "2" response reflects a partial command of the relevant knowledge and skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response partially fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding in a limited way to the given task. • The response demonstrates a limited, partially accurate and partially effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides limited support with few examples and/or some flawed reasoning.
1	<p>The "1" response reflects little or no command of the relevant knowledge and skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response fails to fulfill the purpose of the assignment. • The response demonstrates a largely inaccurate and/or ineffective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides little or no support with few, if any, examples and/or seriously flawed reasoning.

Please note: A response that is unrelated to the assigned topic, unreadable, written in a language other than English, or lacking a sufficient amount of original work to score will be considered **unscorable**. If there is no response to the assignment, then the response will be considered **blank**.