



AT THE

CORE

Worcester Public Schools
Curriculum and Instruction



English Language Arts Monthly Newsletter

Please read below to learn more about revisions to the English Language Arts and Literacy Frameworks, departmental news and updates, as well as instructional strategies and resources.

March 2 is Read Across America Day!

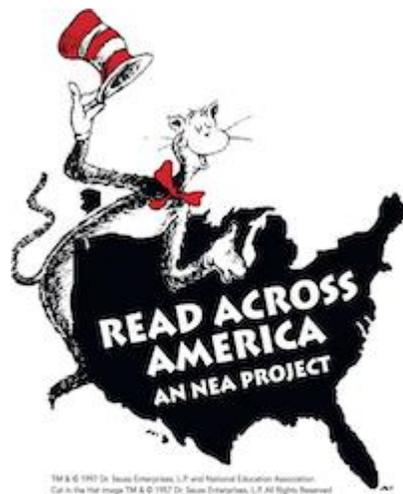
[Read Across America Poem](#)

You're never too old, too wacky, too wild,
To pick up a book and read with a child.
You're never too busy, too cool, or too hot,
To pick up a book and share what you've got.

In schools and communities,
Let's gather around,
Let's pick up a book,
Let's pass it around.

There are kids all around you,
Kids who will need
Someone to hug,
Someone to read.

Come join us March 2nd
Your own special way



www.nea.org/readacross



And make this America's
Read to Kids Day.

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Click [here](#) for ideas and resources to celebrate Read Across America Day!

Revisions to the English Language Arts and Literacy Frameworks

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will vote in March whether or not to adopt the proposed revisions to the English Language Arts Frameworks. You can review the notes and the proposed changes by clicking [here](#) and [here](#).

You will find that majority of the proposed changes are to increase clarity of the standard and eliminate vagueness, to create better vertical alignment, and to increase academic rigor. Some standards have been removed and integrated into other standards. DESE is also working to create resources and examples of what the standards look like in action.

If the Board adopts the proposed revisions, then they would become effective at the start of the 2017-2018 school year. The revised standards would be assessed on the 2018 MCAS.

You can view a detailed Q&A ESE presentation by clicking [here](#).

MCAS 2.0 Resources

Testing season is upon us. Please click [here](#) to access the online MCAS Resource Center. Click on [Student Tutorial & Practice Tests](#), and then click on [View English Language Arts Practice Tests](#).

Click on any grade level. You will have access to computer and paper-based practice tests as well as the scoring rubrics. (Listed under Grade -- Resources)

You will find the scoring rubrics are a combination of the PARCC scoring rubrics and the former MCAS rubrics. Please familiarize yourself with them and have students begin working with them.

Scoring rubric for Grade 6 Practice Test Item #3: Narrative Essay*

	Score Point 4	Score Point 3	Score Point 2	Score Point 1	Score Point 0
Written Expression **	The student response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is effectively developed with narrative elements and is consistently appropriate to the task; is effectively organized with clear and coherent writing; establishes and maintains an effective style. 	The student response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is mostly effectively developed with narrative elements and is mostly appropriate to the task; is organized with mostly clear and coherent writing; establishes and maintains a mostly effective style. 	The student response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is developed with some narrative elements and is generally appropriate to the task; demonstrates some organization with somewhat coherent writing; has a style that is somewhat effective. 	The student response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is minimally developed with few narrative elements and is limited in its appropriateness to the task; demonstrates limited organization and coherence; has a style that has limited effectiveness. 	The student response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is undeveloped and/or inappropriate to the task; lacks organization and coherence; has an inappropriate style.
Knowledge of Language and Conventions	X	The student response to the prompt demonstrates full command of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be a few minor errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage, but meaning is clear.	The student response to the prompt demonstrates some command of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that occasionally impede understanding, but the meaning is generally clear.	The student response to the prompt demonstrates limited command of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that often impede understanding.	The student response to the prompt demonstrates no command of the conventions of standard English. Frequent and varied errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage impede understanding.

*This is a draft rubric and may be updated as necessary.

**These scores will be weighted.

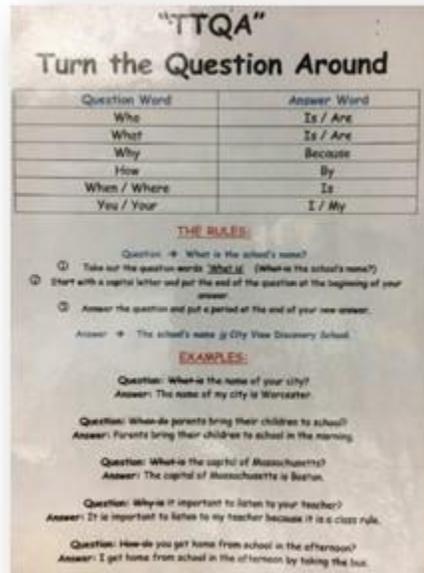
Scoring rubric for Grade 4 Practice Test Item #11: Text-Based Essay*

Idea Development		Conventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL IDEA SELECTION AND EXPLANATION OF EVIDENCE/ DETAILS ORGANIZATION EXPRESSION OF IDEAS AWARENESS OF PURPOSE FOR WRITING 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SENTENCE STRUCTURE GRAMMAR, USAGE AND MECHANICS 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is clear and fully developed Effective selection and explanation of evidence/details Effective organization Clear expression of ideas Full awareness of the purpose for writing 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of sentence structures formed correctly relative to length of essay Consistent control of grammar, usage and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is general and moderately developed Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence/details Moderate organization Adequate expression of ideas Sufficient awareness of the purpose for writing 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some variety of sentence structures formed mostly correctly relative to length of essay Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea may be present and is somewhat developed Limited selection and explanation of evidence/details Limited organization Basic expression of ideas Partial awareness of the purpose for writing 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little variety in sentence structure and/or sentence structures formed incorrectly Little to no control of grammar, usage and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is not present and/or not developed Insufficient evidence/details Minimal or no organization Poor expression of ideas Minimal awareness of the purpose for writing 		

*This is a draft rubric and may be updated as necessary.

Word Around Town

Fourth grade teachers at **City View** are in their second year teaching AVID strategies. **Kimberly Demma** created a “Turn The Question Around” (TTQA) chart that ties in nicely with the 3 levels of questions that students typically encounter. The TTQA chart is a visual that reminds students of ELA elements and expectations that are required to answer constructed response (open response) type questions correctly. Students learn about the “claim” and how it is the topic sentence that introduces the paragraph. Students also use blue pens to mark evidence they use from the book and red pens for their own interpretation (blue from the book, red from the head) to help develop their explanation and analysis. Click [here](#) to download a poster for your classroom!



Worcester Technical High School is taking writing across the curriculum to a new level. As part of WTHS school accountability plan, there is an emphasis on increasing student critical thinking skills which will require students to submit quarterly writing assignments into their technical-area writing portfolios. Similar to academic classes, each student will now have a shop-based writing portfolio. Writing assignments will vary from narratives to expository writing and research. This initiative is all part of tracking Strand 3: Embedded Academic Knowledge and Skills in the CVTE Frameworks (Career Vocational Technical Education). Strand 3 is a crosswalk between vocational/technical standards and academic curriculum frameworks.

Teachers in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2 at **Rice Square School** and **Canterbury Street Magnet School** have been collaborating around the work of literacy expert [Dr. Catherine Snow](#) of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The focus of the group has been around ways to increase academic talk through questioning techniques by integrating literacy and science. You may be familiar with Dr. Snow's [Word Generation](#).

Click [here](#) to submit interesting news and stories to share!

It's Lit!

Submissions to *It's Lit!* A Celebration of Student Writing are due April 13, 2017!

"Inspiration"

It's Lit! is a district-wide celebration of student writing for the Worcester Public Schools. All students Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 are encouraged to submit original, not previously published creative works such as poems, memoirs, and short stories. The theme for this year's publication is "Inspiration." All submissions will be considered regardless of the theme. Click [here](#) to download last year's publication.

Online submission is now open! Please send work electronically by using this google form:

<https://goo.gl/forms/jmR6konHRQTQ5tvE2>. Google Forms seems to respond differently to various browsers. Please try Internet Explorer if you are having difficulty.

Responses are limited to 2,200 words or 10,000 characters (including spaces) on Google Forms. Please arrange for a paper or e-mail submission if a submission is longer than 2,200 words. Paper and e-mail submissions must include this form:

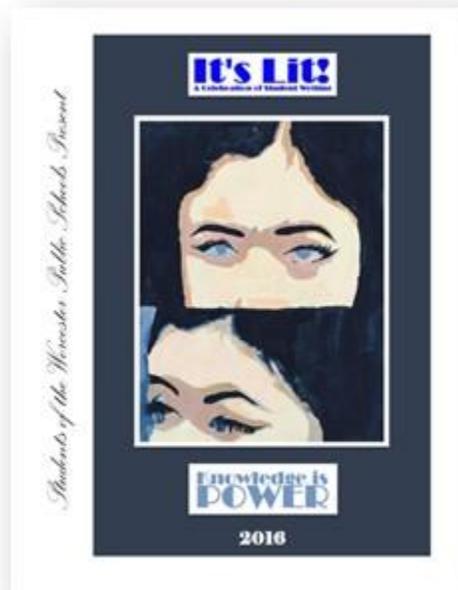
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Qb1S9jdk_VUrUeyLWsvZuswR9in4JWtNwd-YSpHlyE/edit?usp=sharing.

E-mailed forms and all questions related to *It's Lit!* should be directed to Katie Silva at silvak@worc.k12.ma.us. Paper submissions should be sent to Katie Silva / 20 Irving Street / Worcester, MA 01609.

All entries must be submitted by **Thursday, April 13, 2017**. A student committee will assist with the selection and production of the publication.

Lesson In Action! Improving Constructed/Open Response Writing

North High School teacher **Cheryl Cote** walks us through a lesson titled *Felix Culpa: "Reading is the Experience—Writing Is the Opportunity"*, which is designed to teach students how to write robust responses to prompts about what they read (MCAS Open Responses). While this lesson was delivered in 10th grade, it can be adapted for any grade level! It is a visual way to get students to understand the structure of a well-developed response as well as a non-threatening way to teach them how to revise and improve their writing:



Initially this was a department-wide effort to improve reading and writing skills school wide. We began with Nonfiction Fridays in English classes, using a variety of sources found by our English department. Our initial focus was on reading well, annotating answering multiple choice questions. A typical Friday's class "to do today" would look like: Non-fiction Friday – Apply active reading strategies, annotating, and responding to multiple choice questions.

Once 10th grade English students were doing well with actively reading we moved to practicing with prior MCAS examples and added open response questions to their tasks. After a couple of weeks and a look at student work in our 10th grade Common Planning Time we discovered students were trying but not clear of expectations—some response ranged from 2 sentences to 2 pages! An amazing teacher in the department created a quick handout with the exemplar/anchor response and a place for students to score the exemplars and as a department we came up with 4 areas every open response should include and *Felix Culpa* was developed:

4 Areas Every Open Response Should Include: TAG (Tell, Ask, Give)/TTQA (Turn the Question Around); Claim; Evidence/Quotes; Explanation of Evidence/Quotes

Resources: Past MCAS Passages and Exemplars. Click [here](#). (Click a testing year, click on the "Reading Comprehension" link for your grade level, click on the question(s), click on the link(s) of the score for different samples.)

Step 1: Review the MCAS open response rubric with students as well as the four aspects a good open response should include.

Step 2: Provide highlighters/markers that correspond with the handout and have students identify/color-code the components of the exemplar response. (As students completed the activity, they began to see a pattern for the exemplar that would receive a 3 or 4 on the rubric.)

Step 3: Review the structure and components of the response—why did it receive a 3 or 4? What do all 3 or 4s have?

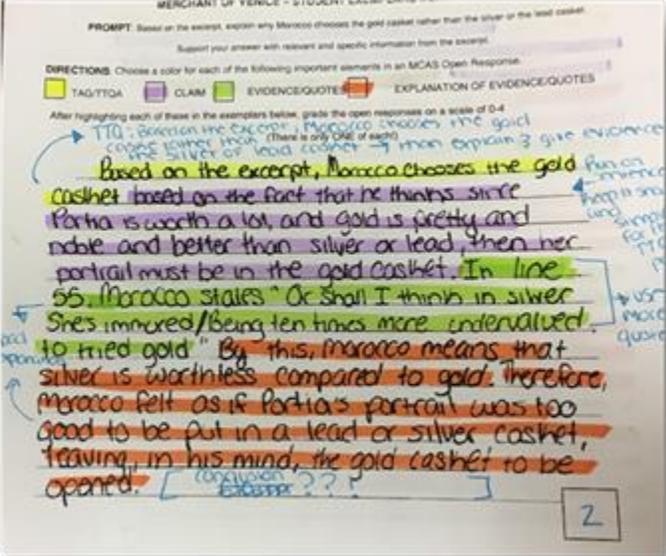
Step 4: Try it out! Give students a copy of the student sample that received a 2 and have them complete the highlighting activity again (to determine missing parts). Then, have students work in pairs to create an improved response that would be worthy of a 4.

Step 5: Proofread! While proofreading their improved version, students highlight and use the handout again to make sure they included all of the criteria and nothing was missing.

Step 6: Students had to write a reflection about what was wrong/changed and provide feedback for the next time.

This lesson helped a variety of learners understand the structure and expectations for a well-developed response, especially students who are visual.

Student Sample, Score 2 from the MCAS:



North High School Student Rewrite

In this excerpt from *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, Morocco chooses the gold casket rather than the silver or the lead casket because he feels Portia is worth more than those other caskets. "The first of god who this insdaption bears: Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire". And what does Prince Morocco desire? Portia. For example in lines 35-37 it states, "I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes, in graces, and in qualities of breeding: But more than these, in love I do deserve." This reveals that if he marries her they would have beautiful children because of their good qualities, they have the same wealth and social status, also he loves her dearly. Also in lines 41-44 it says, "Why that's the lady - all the world desires her. From the four corners of the earth they come, To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint." This interprets how valuable Portia is that people would cross the ocean just to see her. "The lady" as if she's a God. Lastly in lines 61-63 it states, "But here an angel in a golden bed lies all within ... Deliver me the key: here I do choose, and thrive I as I may. This reveals that Morocco chooses the gold, as to him Portia is what he desires, a woman with quality, wealth, beauty, and most of all love. In conclusion this is why Prince Morocco chooses the gold casket over the other two caskets which were silver and lead.

Opportunities

It's Lit! (See above.)

Imagination Begins with You: High School students can submit a short story of 1,000 words or less at www.coolimagination.com. Due March 15, 2017.

National Poetry Month: April is [National Poetry Month](#)! Click [here](#) to get a free poster.

Resources:

[WPS Curriculum Resource Guides:](#) Curriculum resources in addition to what is listed in this section of the newsletter. Please continue to share resources that will benefit all WPS ELA teachers!

[WIDA Download Library:](#) Resources to support English Language learners.

[PARCC Test Items:](#) Released PARCC items for all tested grades.

Vermont Writing Collaborative: Information, resources, and materials for writing instruction.

Western Massachusetts Writing Project: Excellent professional development and workshop opportunities.

GALE Pages: For a complete digital collection that allows you to search for leveled text in multiple languages, digital annotation, and audio of passages.

Word Generation: An academic vocabulary program.

Look-For Observation Guides: A tool to think about high quality lesson planning and instructional practice aligned to the Massachusetts ELA Frameworks (Grades K-8)

Synthesis Essays: A collection of links to support teaching and development of synthesis essays.

FirstBook: A FREE collection of digital text (all grades)

Odell Education: High quality lessons and supports for critical reading and writing skills. (Grades 6-12)

Schmoop: Like Sparknotes, Schmoop offers many summaries and guides for literature. However, Schmoop is written in “cool,” kid-friendly lingo and offers engaging video summary of texts and concepts as well. [Here](#) is their take on *Romeo and Juliet*:

WebEnglishTeacher: If you need a lesson plan, an idea, or a resource on any topic from Children’s Literature to Mythology, to Grammar, WebEnglishTeacher has something for you!

Readworks: From units on novels to skills and strategies, ReadWorks will help you build reading comprehension. This is primarily for elementary grades, but you may find some valuable resources and tools.

NewsELA: NewsELA is a great resource for leveled nonfiction articles.

Kaizena: If you want to save time grading papers, particularly with written feedback, Kaizena might be the solution for you!

Ripped from the Headlines: Ideas for pairing fiction and nonfiction—let The New York Times provide you with articles that go perfectly with the novels you are teaching!

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