

The MCA Writing Test:  
Detriment or Delight?  
Choose Your Attitude

**Grade Level:** The rubrics and scoring criteria for the 5 th grade MCA writing test are important for every English teacher to see. The "fun" we have with the MCA's prior to the actual test are specifically for 5 th grade teachers who administer it.

**Approximate length of time to complete the lesson:** A positive attitude towards the MCA's needs to begin before students walk in the door. Good teaching of writing begins when they walk in and lasts all year. And the "fun" takes a tiny bit of time just prior to administering the writing assessment.

**Objectives:**

- 1) To let all writing teachers know that the 5th grade MCA writing test is based on a solid foundation of good writing practices and is a fair and accurate assessment tool.
- 2) To show that if a teacher teaches about good writing throughout the year and has a positive attitude toward administering the MCA, her/his students will have tremendous success with it.
- 3) To demonstrate how much fun we have preparing our students for the MCA writing test.

**Specific Standards addressed:** MN Writing Standards

**Brief Summary/Outline:** The teachers in our building were like many in the state when the MCA's first rolled into town. We didn't like them and we were very much opposed to the thought of a writing test, which was, seemingly, formulaic. We felt we would be spending too much time teaching to the test and lose all the creativity writing, and the teaching of writing, has to offer. After the first year of the MCA writing test, our principal encouraged us to pick apart the tests: see how they were scored, examine the rubrics that were used, find out what our 5th grade students fell short on. The answers surprised us. The MCA was actually based on the best practices of writing and they were being scored with no "formulas" in mind, just good writing.

**Resources:** District 112's teachers and administrators who collaborated on these materials  
Department of Children,. Families and Learning

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