



Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCE) Assessments English Language Arts

Welcome to the M² GLCE ELA Assessments.

These assessment items are provided for teachers to use with students to assess students' learning of the GLCE. Because they are intended as formative assessments, it is recommended that teachers use these for the grade level they are teaching beginning as early as mid-year. For example, the second grade assessments would be given to second grade students as a way to determine the students' learning for that year. These assessments should not be used for large-scale assessment.¹

It may be helpful to explain to your students that these assessment items will be used by teachers to help them know what students have learned and to plan instruction for what GLCE still need to be covered. Teachers are encouraged to use these assessments as a way to share best practice in literacy teaching with their students.

You will notice there are three categories of assessments **to use with students** from which you can select. There are ***Reading Assessments***, ***Writing from Knowledge and Experience Assessments*** and ***Writing and Editing in Context Assessments***. You will want to look at the ELA ***GLCE Assessment Instructions*** on the following pages that are provided for each category before using with students. In the instructions you will see helpful tips for administering the assessments as well as suggestions for classroom literacy instruction. Please note that we have been granted limited copyright privilege for some of the reading selections and are therefore, providing only those selections that can be copied. We have included the title, author, publication and date for those not included in that grade's file. It is the contention of the M² Consortium as well as leading literacy researchers and teachers that best practices in literacy instruction, strategic approaches to reading and writing, and explicit teaching of test taking strategies align with one another. When we offer students the opportunity for authentic learning, model literacy strategies and processes, and show students how to approach any test situation strategically, we encourage them to be metacognitive about their learning. We hope that these sample assessment items will serve as a helpful resource and allow you to approach your teaching and students' learning in that manner.

The Mid-Michigan Consortium would like to acknowledge the following organizations for the use of materials that were instrumental in development of this project:

- St. Clair ISD K-7 Assessment Materials
- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) materials appear by permission of the Florida Department of Education, assessment and School Performance Office, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400
- *Highlights for Children* materials appear by permission of Editor in Chief Kent Brown Jr. for non-commercial purposes
- *Ranger Rick* magazine with permission of publisher, the National Wildlife Federation
- Macomb ISD – “Profiles in Writing” Project
- *Cricket* magazine
- *Detroit Free Press Inc.: Yak's Corner Division*

We would also like to thank Troy Hicks from the Red Cedar Writing Project for his assistance during this project.

¹ It is worthwhile to visit the MEAP homepage at <http://www.michigan.gov/meap> in order to stay up to date on recent, official news related to the MEAP tests.



GLCE English Language Arts Assessment Instructions

Reading Assessment

Before the Reading Assessment

As you begin the reading assessments, ask students about the strategies that strong readers use in order to make meaning from texts. Ask, “What do good readers do?” Some possible responses include:²

- Make connections from the known to the new;
- Ask questions to predict or find specific information;
- Visualize what is happening in the text;
- Infer what is happening “between the lines” of the text;
- Determine the main ideas; and
- Synthesize information across the entire text and between texts.

Also, based on the GLCE for your grade level, engage the students in a discussion about the differences between narrative and informational texts. As a class, examine the different components of these texts that may be highlighted in the assessment items. For instance, at the third grade level, it would be pertinent to compare how narrative texts use literary devices to contribute to the story (**R.NT.03.04**), while information texts use different structures such as headings and timelines (**R.IT.03.03**). By having students compare the different elements of the genres, they will begin to think about how to approach readings with different strategies and purposes.

During the Reading Assessment

Although these are sample assessment items, it is a good time to have students start practicing actual test taking strategies without assistance from you or their peers. Therefore, these strategies should be taught before test taking. (**NOTE:** *Advising students in any manner beyond reading the instructions during an actual MEAP test is not permitted. Make sure that students understand this in order for them to use these strategies independently by test time.*)

While students are taking the reading assessment, there are some strategies that they can try³:

- Use graphic organizers, like a Venn diagram, to begin planning for their response to reading selections. Take notes from each selection so that comparing them later is more efficient.
- Have students read only a few paragraphs, stop and then ask themselves some questions about what they have read. Have them underline, circle and record short notes in the margins.
- Have students, in their minds, reread the selection with exaggerated expression. Have them make characters’ voices come alive in narratives and emphasize italicized or boldfaced words in informational texts.

² This list of strategies is compiled from Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. York, Me.: Stenhouse Publishers.

³ Some of these suggestions are taken from Calkins, L. M., Montgomery, K., Santman, D., & Falk, B. (1998). *A teacher's guide to standardized reading tests: Knowledge is power*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Have students examine the style of questions that are being asked. Are they:
 - “Right there” questions, where the information is plainly evident in the text; if so, can you point to that information? Multiple-choice questions are sometimes written at this level of questioning.
 - “Think and search” questions, where the reader must put together two pieces of related information; if so, can you find those two pieces of information? Multiple-choice questions are often written at this level of questioning.
 - “On your own” questions, where the reader must express an opinion or reasoned argument; if so, what examples can you collect? This level of questioning usually takes place in constructed responses.

After the Reading Assessment

Once the assessment is complete, it may be appropriate to review the answers and have students check their own work while discussing the questions as a class or in small groups. During this discussion, talk about inferring, connecting, drawing conclusions, etc. as appropriate.

Also, this is a great time to model “thinking aloud” about questions. You may do this as a teacher-led activity with younger students, prompting their responses as well. With older students, it may be appropriate to have students model their thinking, both correct and incorrect, so other students get a sense of how questions are best answered.

Finally, these assessment items do not include a constructed response that connects two texts (similar to what students will see on the statewide MEAP). Nevertheless, this would be a good time for students to share and practice evaluating one another’s responses with the Sample Student rubrics. They can get a sense of what goes into a quality response and how they might improve their own, based on these qualities.

Writing from Knowledge and Experience Assessment

Before the Writing from Knowledge and Experience Assessment

Based on the GLCE for your grade level and your knowledge about best practice in the teaching of writing, teaching in a *writing workshop* is the recommended approach for helping students become writers. This model of instruction generally allows for student choice in writing topics and genres, relies on collaborative peer and teacher response, and demands that students write for authentic purposes.⁴ To add to our understanding of assessing writing, recent trends have focused on the “Six Traits” of writing⁵:

- Ideas—a narrow topic with an original perspective;
- Organization—an inviting lead, clear pattern throughout the text and strong conclusion;
- Voice—the writer’s style which should be natural and connects with the reader;
- Word choice—a variety of appropriate and interesting words throughout;
- Sentence fluency—a combination of short, medium and long sentences that add to the style;
- Conventions—the use of appropriate grammar, mechanics, and spelling.

These are traits that teachers of writing developed and are adaptable across genres. They are virtually synonymous with the expectations that we see evident in the GLCE and the MEAP.

Thus, before approaching any writing task, students should have had plenty of opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. All writing can be approached as being produced for different purposes and

⁴ For elementary writing workshop models, see: Ray, K. W., & Laminack, L. L. (2001). *The writing workshop: Working through the hard parts (and they're all hard parts)*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. For middle school models, see: Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

⁵ Spandel, V. (2001). *Creating writers: Through 6-trait writing assessment and instruction* (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

audiences. Young writers should be taught that good writing incorporates details and examples to engage the reader. Teaching good writing processes and teaching students how to approach writing for assessments or for test taking are not mutually exclusive events. Allowing them to think like writers, and understand how they will be assessed will contribute to their success in real writing and writing for high-stakes tests.⁶

During the Writing from Knowledge and Experience Assessment

Once it is test time, Barry Lane's notion of "Fake Writing Day" comes into play.⁷ This is the one time that students will not really know their audience or get a well-thought reaction to their work. However, that doesn't mean that the task is unapproachable or not worth doing. Actually, the writer can take heart in the fact that the readers who score statewide writing do not know the authors. Readers who score papers enjoy reading an original selection in the stacks of thousands that they encounter. Therefore, adding details or embellishing stories (which, in the writing workshop, they have already shared in a variety of genres and for different audiences) is a suggested practice.

The mechanics of writing (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc.) are considered in the scores to the extent that they enhance or detract from a piece of writing. Some students use excellent mechanics, but do not write coherent responses. Other students may have terrible mechanics, but have developed, clear, focused, and connected responses.⁸

Thus, it is important to help students develop strategies for approaching any writing assignment or assessments. Some suggestions:

Students should reflect on the writing topic and hone in on one prompt.

- What claim will I make/story will I tell to respond effectively to this prompt in the time that I have available?
- Who is my audience (usually, "an interested adult") and what will I need to do to convince/persuade/entertain/etc. him or her?
- What models of text structure can I use? (This is a good place to think about the expository text structures outlined in your GLCE. For instance, to return to third grade, might students use compare and contrast, cause and effect, or problem/solution organizational patterns? **W.PR.03.04**)
- Since I may not have time to go through the writing process and get peer feedback, what do I know about my own strengths and weaknesses as a writer and how to approach this task effectively?

If students are able to get this far in their planning, then the chances are good that they can draft an effective outline and/or concept map and then continue writing from there. Again, discussing genre, purpose, and audience concerns early and often with students will allow them to successfully navigate these types of testing and writing situations with a better handle on the task and what they can reasonably expect to accomplish.

After the Writing from Knowledge and Experience

You may want to incorporate peer response into these assessments.

If you decide to grade these writing assessments, you should (with student permission) select range finding papers. Select 2 high level papers, 2 mid level papers, and 2 low papers. Have students read, edit, and discuss the qualities of each level paper. Ask questions such as what makes a high level paper, why is this paper low, what could be changed to make the paper better, etc. The more closely you can tie this discussion to specific traits of the writing and the GLCE that students are expected to master, the more useful it will be for them.

After returning papers to students, invite them to self-evaluate based on the criteria discussed as a class to see if they agree or disagree with the grade and the qualities you have noted. Since this is a draft, give the students an opportunity to improve their piece of writing and revise it for a real audience and purpose.

⁶ Gere, A. R., Christenbury, L., & Sassi, K. (2005). *Writing on demand: Best practices and strategies for success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

⁷ Lane, B. (1999). *The reviser's toolbox*. Shoreham, VT: Discover Writing Press.

⁸ Michigan Educational Assessment Program. (2004). *Facts about winter 2004 scoring of writing*. Retrieved August 1, 2005, from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/ScoringFactsW2004Writing_96385_7.pdf

Writing and Editing in Context Assessment

Before the Writing and Editing in Context Assessment

Before introducing this section, you need to become familiar with what students are expected to do. The purpose of this section is to get at the best practices in teaching writing related to peer response and using grammar in context. There are multiple reasons for adding these requirements to the GLCE. One is that isolated grammar instruction still persists, despite evidence showing that it doesn't contribute to students learning how to write.⁹ Yet, this doesn't mean that teachers should entirely avoid teaching grammar. It means that we need to incorporate the teaching of grammar, spelling, and mechanics strategically into our practice.

These balanced practices for teaching grammar and the like are reflected in the GLCE in a variety of ways. To continue from our third grade example, these practices would range from general practices such as "Constructively and specifically respond orally to the writing of others by identifying sections of the text to improve sequence" (W.PR.03.05) to specific grammar, spelling and mechanics questions that address those such as being able to "Identify and use subjects and verbs that are in agreement" (W.GR.03.01). This covers a broad range of topics and, fortunately, doesn't dictate a teaching style. It does make us accountable for making instruction in grammar, spelling, and mechanics specific, contextual, and strategic.

Therefore, this section, like "Writing from Knowledge and Experience," assumes that students are familiar with working in a writing workshop, which uses mini-lessons regularly. It demands that students know the GLCE related to grammar, mechanics and spelling so that they can answer multiple-choice questions about errors in a peer's piece. It also assumes that students will be able to offer a peer response in writing *through* a specific revision task. This is a difficult task to ask of students, but is one that real writers must engage in so that they can become fluent in offering and incorporating suggested revisions into their writing.

Thus, before giving this section, review the format with students. They will be reading an actual example of writing from their grade level and then responding to the multiple choice questions and constructed response. As you do this, you might have students refer to the GLCE and brainstorm with students what constitutes good writing at your grade level¹⁰. This is, of course, not a one-time discussion, but one that you can have with students over the course of the entire year as you focus on new genres and GLCE.

During the Writing and Editing in Context Assessment

Again, like the other sections, teach these strategies so that students use them regularly. Students will need to learn to check spelling, grammar and mechanics sometimes on their own, without the aid of resource materials. To that end, throughout the school year, offer students as many chances as possible to participate in the following activities, both individually and collaboratively:

- Contribute to a class "word wall" of new and challenging words;
- Examine the GLCE and think about how to use expected grammatical structures, mechanics, and word lists in the context of their writing and modeling during mini-lessons;
- Frequently have opportunities to edit their own work and the work of others for spelling, grammar, and mechanics;
- Frequently have opportunities to respond to others' writing and revise their own work after having peer and teacher response; and
- Bring a select number of pieces to publication to be shared both in an author's chair and with an audience beyond the classroom.

⁹ For a summary of such work, see Weaver, C. (1996). *Teaching grammar in context*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

¹⁰ For lists of student- and teacher-generated lists of qualities of writing at each grade level, see Weber, E., Nelson, B., & Woods, R. (2000). *Into the millennium: Profiles in writing fourth yearbook 2000*. Retrieved August 1, 2005, from <http://www.misd.net/Languageart/profiles.htm>

For the constructed response revision, students need to do two separate cognitive tasks and then represent that thinking in their response:

- Understand what is ineffective about the section of text and create an appropriate revision; and
- Create a revised version of that section that represents their best understanding of what the author was trying to get across in the piece.

In other words, the revision must show that the student has thought carefully about the entire piece, reflected on the effectiveness of the current version, and offered a new version that makes the piece more effective overall.

Neither of these tasks are easy, nor will they be accomplished in one or two mini-lessons (or during the test itself). These are writing processes that take time to teach and learn in the context of many pieces over a lifetime of writing. Students need to approach any writing assignment or assessment with the attitude that they are constantly becoming better writers.

After the Writing and Editing in Context Assessment

As a class, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the sample paper and share possible revisions from students. Determine which revisions were most and least effective, and why they were so. During this process, ask students to refer back to the original text and think about the context for the revision, asking some of the following questions:

- Did the writer match the voice and tone of the original piece?
- Does the revised introduction/conclusion/section contribute something new to the piece, or is it repetitive and cliché?
- What do you think the original writer would say about this revision? Would it work for him/her?

Again, if students have opportunities to see this type of response modeled and also share in this type of thinking, they will become more proficient in this type of response and revision. Keep talking about the qualities of good writing (the Six Traits) as you encourage students to revise. By focusing on the assessment aspect of the writing, students will become better able to think about the effectiveness of their writing and the responses that they offer to others.
