

PART V:

CMT 4 Language Arts

Direct Assessment of Writing

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I. OVERVIEW

The Direct Assessment of Writing (DAW) subtest of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) provides students with a prompt and students are directed to provide a written response. The CMT 4 DAW is the *same* at all tested grades as the DAW in both the CMT 2 and CMT 3 in the following ways:

Students are given exactly 45 minutes to provide a written response. Directions suggest that students take the first part of the 45 minutes to plan before writing the actual response. Each student's writing sample—the only part that is scored—is captured on no more than the three pages which are provided for this purpose in the test booklet. No additional pages are considered when scoring.

The written response is scored holistically, which means that the score represents the overall strength of the paper as judged by trained scorers. (For more information about holistic scoring, please see the rubrics on pages 248-253). Each scorer assigns a score on a scale from 1 to 6. However, two different trained scorers will score each paper and their scores will be added together, resulting in a final score in the 2 to 12 range. Scorers are trained to read through errors in spelling and writing mechanics. These errors are not considered as part of the holistic score.

As was the case for CMT 3, goal-level work in writing for CMT 4 will be determined by a combination of the score on the DAW (60% weight) and the score on the Editing and Revising Subtest (40% weight). The CMT 4 DAW is *different* from those in past generations in the following ways: The modes of writing have been expanded (as described in the next paragraph). Students will now be provided with a page in the test booklet to help them plan their paper. Students will be required to use a pencil. Pens are no longer allowed. This requirement is due to a change in scoring technology. The rubrics (reproduced later in this section) have been modified from previous generations to include the new grades (3, 5 and 7).

II. THE MODES OF WRITING

Writing prompts are developed at each grade level to be appropriate for students in terms of interest and experience. Third and fourth graders will be asked to write a *narrative* piece; fifth and sixth graders will write an *expository* piece; and seventh and eighth graders will write a *persuasive* piece.

Narrative (Grades 3 and 4)

The narrative mode will consist of prompts designed to elicit both personal narratives (see the Grade 3 example in this book) and fictional narratives (see the Grade 4 example in this book). The scorers will be using one narrative rubric to help them determine a score for each paper. A holistic impression of the quality of the writing is the guiding criterion for the score.

Expository (Grades 5 and 6)

The expository mode will consist of prompts designed to elicit both traditional expositions (see the Grade 5 example in this book) and prompts that specifically ask the student to compare and/or contrast two things (see the Grade 6 example in this book). The scorers will be using one expository rubric to help them determine a score for each paper. A holistic impression of the quality of the writing is the guiding criterion for the score.

Persuasive (Grades 7 and 8)

There is a small distinction between the seventh grade mode and the eighth grade mode in CMT 4. At Grade 7, students will be given a persuasive prompt of the same type that was administered to Grade 8 students in CMT 3 (see the Grade 7 example in this book). The Grade 8 students will be given a longer prompt than what students have seen on the CMT test in the past (see the Grade 8 example in this book). Additionally, “attention to audience” is a new criterion added to the rubric for these two grades. These two modifications are explained below.

Eighth graders will be given a longer prompt to bring this subtest a step closer to the kind of background information students will see on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in Grade 10. On the CAPT, students are expected to draw specifically from background articles. In CMT 4, a small measure of background information will be provided that the student *could* use when writing his or her essay. However, unlike the CAPT, the CMT 4 scoring rubric will not *require* students to use any of this added information. Students who effectively use this added information may achieve higher scores, not because they specifically cite the given information, but because their essays may be of higher quality. It will still be quite possible to get the highest score without making specific reference to any of the added material.

The ‘awareness of audience’ portion of the rubric for both Grades 7 and 8 is designed to more closely approximate the expectations of the CAPT examination. Awareness of audience will impact holistic scoring by the scorers examining the extent to which the author recognizes the need for the reader to understand his or her arguments and how well the author elaborates on these arguments to draw in the audience. This has very little to do with the inclusion of formal elements, such as the salutation or closing of a letter. An effective paper can earn a top score, even if it is missing formal elements, as long as audience awareness is demonstrated.

III. DIRECT ASSESSMENT OF WRITING GUIDELINES AND RUBRICS BY GRADE

Grades 3-4: General Guidelines

The CMT 4 Grades 3 and 4 written responses are first drafts written in 45 minutes in reaction to a prompt designed to elicit narrative writing. Trained readers score these timed responses holistically, which means that they determine a score based on the overall impression most often gained from one reading of the response.

This rubric outlines a six-point scale. Each score point on that scale is described by an overall statement which captures the essence of the response. The elements of the response (elaboration, organization and fluency) that are *typical* for that score point are described below the overall statement. Individual responses may be stronger in one feature and weaker in another. Therefore, the list of features at each score point, while helpful, cannot perfectly describe every response in a score-point category.

A committee of expert readers uses this rubric as a guide to select anchor papers for each score point. Anchor papers are examples of actual student work. The committee prepares an anchor set composed of several papers at each score point. They deliberately select papers to show an appropriate range of writing skills for each score point and to represent the variety of approaches students take when addressing the writing prompt. Trained readers rely heavily on these anchor sets to guide their scoring.

Errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage are not to be considered as part of the criteria for scoring CMT 4 writing samples. Also, papers receive a score based on the work the student did complete even if the response seems to be unfinished. Because the writing sample is a timed response, it is generally assumed that these errors and omissions could have been corrected if the student had been given an opportunity to revise and edit. Readers, therefore, are trained to read through these errors when they score student papers.

Grades 3-4: Rubric

Score Point 1: An undeveloped response

Typical elements:

- Contains few or vague details
- Is too brief to indicate sequencing of events
- May be difficult to read and understand

Score Point 2: An underdeveloped narrative

Typical elements:

- Contains general, unelaborated and/or list-like details
- Shows little evidence of sequencing of events
- May be awkward and confusing

Score Point 3: A minimally-developed narrative with little expansion of key events and characters

Typical elements:

- Has little elaboration with more general than specific details
- Shows some evidence of an organizational strategy with some sequencing of events
- May be awkward in parts

Score Point 4: A somewhat-developed narrative with moderate expansion of key events and characters

Typical elements:

- Is adequately elaborated with a mix of general and specific details
- Shows a satisfactory organizational strategy with satisfactory sequencing of events
- May be somewhat fluent

Score Point 5: A developed narrative with mostly effective expansion of key events and characters

Typical elements:

- Is moderately well elaborated with mostly specific details
- Shows generally strong organizational strategy and sequencing of events
- May be moderately fluent

Score Point 6: A well-developed narrative expanding on key events and characters

Typical elements:

- Is fully elaborated with specific details
- Shows strong organizational strategy and sequencing of events
- Is fluent

Grades 5-6: General Guidelines

The CMT 4 Grade 5 and 6 written responses are first drafts written in 45 minutes in reaction to a prompt designed to elicit expository writing. Trained readers score these timed responses holistically, which means that they determine a score based on the overall impression most often gained from a single reading of the response.

This rubric outlines a six-point scale. Each score point on that scale is described by an overall statement which captures the essence of the response. The elements of the response (elaboration, organization and fluency) that are *typical* for that score point are described below the overall statement. Individual responses may be stronger in one feature and weaker in another. Therefore, the list of features at each score point, while helpful, cannot perfectly describe every response in a score-point category.

A committee of expert readers uses this rubric as a guide to select anchor papers for each score point. Anchor papers are examples of actual student work. The committee prepares an anchor set composed of several papers at each score point. They deliberately select papers to show an appropriate range of writing skills for each score point and to represent the variety of approaches students take when addressing the writing prompt. Trained readers rely heavily on these anchor sets to guide their scoring.

Errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage are not to be considered as part of the criteria for scoring CMT 4 writing samples. Also, papers receive a score based on the work the student did complete even if the response seems to be unfinished. Because the writing sample is a timed response, it is generally assumed that these errors and omissions could have been corrected if the student had been given an opportunity to revise and edit. Readers, therefore, are trained to read through these errors when they score student papers.

Grades 5-6: Rubric

Score Point 1: An undeveloped response

Typical elements:

- Contains few or vague details
- Is too brief to demonstrate organization
- May be difficult to read and understand

Score Point 2: An underdeveloped response

Typical elements:

- Contains general, unelaborated and/or list-like details
- Shows little evidence of organization
- May be awkward and confusing

Score Point 3: A minimally-developed response with inadequate details

Typical elements:

- Has minimal elaboration with more general than specific details
- Shows some organization
- May be awkward in parts and may lack most transitions

Score Point 4: A somewhat-developed response with adequate details

Typical elements:

- Is adequately elaborated with a mix of general and specific details
- Shows satisfactory organization
- May be somewhat fluent with some transitional language

Score Point 5: A developed response

Typical elements:

- Is well elaborated with mostly specific details
- Shows generally strong organization
- May be generally fluent and may show proficient use of transitional language

Score Point 6: A well-developed response

Typical elements:

- Is fully elaborated with specific details
- Shows strong organization
- Is fluent and may use effective transitional language

Grades 7-8: General Guidelines

The CMT 4 Grades 7 and 8 written responses are first drafts written in 45 minutes in reaction to a prompt designed to elicit persuasive writing. Trained readers score these timed responses holistically, which means that they determine a score based on the overall impression most often gained from a single reading of the response.

This rubric outlines a six-point scale. Each score point on that scale is described by an overall statement which captures the essence of the response. The elements of the response (elaboration, organization, fluency and audience awareness) that are *typical* for that score point are described below the overall statement. Individual responses may be stronger in one feature and weaker in another. Therefore, the list of features at each score point, while helpful, cannot perfectly describe every response in a score-point category.

A committee of expert readers uses this rubric as a guide to select anchor papers for each score point. Anchor papers are examples of actual student work. The committee prepares an anchor set composed of several papers at each score point. They deliberately select papers to show an appropriate range of writing skills for each score point and to represent the variety of approaches students take when addressing the writing prompt. Trained readers rely heavily on these anchor sets to guide their scoring.

Errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage are not considered as part of the criteria for scoring CMT 4 writing samples. Also, papers receive a score based on the work the student did complete even if the response seems to be unfinished. Because the writing sample is a timed response, it is generally assumed that these errors and omissions could have been corrected if the student had been given an opportunity to revise and edit. Readers, therefore, are trained to read through these errors when they score student papers.

Grades 7-8: Rubric

Score Point 1: An undeveloped response that may take a position but offers no more than very minimal support

Typical elements:

- Contains few or vague details
- Is awkward and fragmented
- May be difficult to read and understand
- May show no awareness of audience

Score Point 2: An underdeveloped response that may or may not take a position

Typical elements:

- Contains only general reasons with unelaborated and/or list-like details
- Shows little or no evidence of organization
- May be awkward and confusing or simplistic
- May show little awareness of audience

Score Point 3: A minimally-developed response that may take a position, but with inadequate support and details

Typical elements:

- Has reasons with minimal elaboration and more general than specific details
- Shows some organization
- May be awkward in parts with few transitions
- Shows some awareness of audience

Score Point 4: A somewhat-developed response that takes a position and provides adequate support

Typical elements:

- Has adequately elaborated reasons with a mix of general and specific details
- Shows satisfactory organization
- May be somewhat fluent with some transitional language
- Shows adequate awareness of audience

Score Point 5: A developed response that takes a clear position and provides reasonably persuasive support

Typical elements:

- Has moderately well-elaborated reasons with mostly specific details
- Exhibits generally strong organization
- May be moderately fluent with transitional language throughout
- May show a consistent awareness of audience

Score Point 6: A well-developed response that takes a clear and thoughtful position and provides persuasive support

Typical elements:

- Has fully elaborated reasons with specific details
- Exhibits strong organization
- Is fluent and uses sophisticated transitional language
- May show a heightened awareness of audience