

2024 MCAS ELA Essay Webinar Middle Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome to our presentation on the MCAS ELA Essays in grades 6, 7, and 8. My name is Jennifer Malonson, and I am an ELA test Developer at the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This presentation is geared toward middle school ELA teachers and curriculum coordinators and was originally shared as a webinar on March 5, 2024, by members of the ELA Test Development Team. To make the best use of this presentation, in addition to the PowerPoint, you will need to access the participant packet which includes the ELA rubric, anchor papers, and student responses. These will be referred to throughout the presentation.

Slide 2: During today's session we will:

- Provide a brief overview of the MCAS test development and scoring process.
- Analyze student work samples from a grade 7 essay.
- Individual score student responses.
- And review additional resources available on the Department's website.

Slide 3: These are the Department's strategic objectives. In partnership with districts, schools, and programs, DESE has identified 3 strategic objectives. Today we are focused on Deeper Learning. As part of this session, we want to think about engaging all students in grade-level work and relevant to them. We will connect to the MA frameworks and think about ways to support students in thinking critically, asking questions, and making meaning.

Slide 4: Before we look at the grade 7 essay question, it's important that we have some background and understanding of how questions, which we refer to as items, end up on an operational MCAS test. This is the "Life Cycle of an ELA Item."

- From beginning to end, this process takes about two years. We plan to highlight some of the steps in the process. We have two educator committees - the Assessment Development Committee or ADC (purple boxes) and the Bias and Sensitivity Committee or BSC (blue boxes). Both committees are tasked with making sure that the passages and items on the MCAS test are grade appropriate, accurate, and aligned to the Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks.
- The first sets of ADC and BSC meetings focus on passages and items. At the passage review meetings, passages are reviewed by educators to make sure that they are grade appropriate, rich enough to support a variety of questions, and provide opportunities to assess the standards in the ELA frameworks. This is also an opportunity for educators to suggest item ideas for each passage.
- At the item review meeting, educators review all items associated with the passages. One of the important tasks at this meeting is to review the essay as well as the scoring notes that accompany them. The scoring notes include information and examples that we anticipate students might use to answer the question. It is not an exhaustive list. The scoring notes are important for us to determine if there is enough information in the passage for a student to write a response. The questions are then prepared to be put on the test and are reviewed by content experts and editorial staff.
- After the test is administered (that is in the orange box,) the test is separated into operational items and field test items. The operational items – which are common to all students, are scored and results are sent to districts and families.

- Essays are scored through a process called benchmarking. During the benchmarking process, anchor papers and scoring materials are chosen for each essay. Anchor papers are actual student papers that represent each of the score points based on the language of the rubric.
- The field test items do not count towards the student's score, but the educator committees are reconvened to review the data and to determine whether the item can go into the operational eligible bank. As you can see, our educator teams play an integral role in our process.

Slide 5: Essay questions are scored through a process called benchmarking. When the benchmarking process is complete, the anchor papers and training sets that have been chosen for each essay response become part of the scoring materials available to score the items. In addition to the passage and question, scorers have the scoring guide, anchor papers, and annotations to use when scoring essay questions. We will be using these materials throughout our presentation today.

- The scoring guide is the rubric which we will look at more closely in a few minutes. Many of you are likely familiar with the scoring guide already. Scorers pay attention to the specific descriptions of what is expected at each score point for both idea development and conventions. Included with the scoring guide are the scoring notes that were developed with educators during the item review process.
- A set of anchor papers is put together for each essay during the benchmarking process. These papers are actual student responses that represent each score point. The anchor papers have been selected based on the rubric and the scoring notes. The anchor papers are used to illustrate the expectations at each score point.
- Annotations are additional notes added to each of the anchor papers. These notes are a way to articulate, explain, and expand upon the scoring, providing more of an explanation than the rubric alone. While the scoring guide is applied to every Essay item, each essay has its own set of unique anchor papers, and annotations that are specific to the question.

Slide 6: The Essay Scoring Guide or Rubric can be found on our website and page 10 of your participant packet. The grades 6-8 Essay Rubric is a 2 trait rubric and is made up of criteria for item development and criteria for Standard English Conventions. On all rubrics, the overall criteria are listed at the top and the specifics are outlined for each of the possible score points. In grades 6-8, students can score up to 5 points for idea development from 5 points for "insightful and fully developed" responses down to 0 for "incorrectly responding". The rubric for conventions is scored up to 3 points with 3 points for "consistent control" and 0 points for incorrect or no control.

Slide 7: In grades 6-8 students can score up to 5 points for idea development. At the top of the idea development portion of the rubric are the elements that are assessed for this trait. Below are specific expectations for each score point.

Slide 8: In grades 6-8 students can score up to 3 points for conventions. At the top of the conventions portion of the rubric are the elements that are assessed for this portion of the essay. Below are specific expectations for each score point.

Slide 9: This is the general language that is included for Idea Development and Conventions. The rubric is on page 10 of the participant pack. Idea development aligns to writing standards 1, 2, or 3 and writing standard 4. For idea development, we analyze the essays in terms of

- The quality and development of the central idea - how well does the student state the answer to the question.

- The selection and explanation of evidence and/or details - the type of evidence the student uses to support their answer. You'll notice an asterisk next to central idea and evidence and details. This is meant to draw your attention to the box at the bottom of the rubric. For narrative writing, the quality and development of narrative elements will be assessed in place of a central idea. Narrative elements should include, but are not limited to plot, character, setting, dialogue, action, and/or description. Students should use details to demonstrate understanding of text.
- We're also looking at organization – how well the student organizes their writing – does the way it is structured make sense?
- expression of ideas – how well does the student elaborate in their writing?
- And the awareness of the task and mode

Conventions align to language standards 1, 2 and 3. For conventions, we analyze the essay in terms of

- sentence structure – how well the student writes the sentences and the variety.
- grammar, usage, and mechanics - how well the student adheres to standard English conventions, including use of correct grammar, word usage and mechanics, such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphs.
- For conventions, we are looking at the overall essay. It is important to note that we are looking for control and not perfection. Does the student show control of sentence structure, grammar, usage and mechanics in a way that is expected of the grade level? We're looking to see that the control of conventions is sustained. If a response is too brief, the student misses the opportunity to show that skill. This is why the language of the rubric refers to "length and complexity". A response does not have to be perfect to get a top conventions score; we recognize that this is on demand writing. There is no direct correlation between the number of errors and the score.

For both idea development and conventions, the expectations outlined in the general language portion of the scoring rubric stay the same for all score points. The degree to which these expectations are demonstrated is different for each score point.

Slide 10: Now that we've discussed the language in the rubric, let's talk about the MCAS student essay expectations.

- First, the response must address the question and the writing mode. The question includes information on what should be included in the student's essay such as supporting a central idea or extending a story. There are standardized student directions for each writing mode (e.g., narrative, explanatory, argument). It is important that students use the question and direction lines to understand what is expected in their essay.
- The response must be based on the passage. Outside information does not count toward the student score. For explanatory and argument essays, a student could use a direct quote from the passage and further explain it, they could paraphrase a section, or they could do both. We want students to use the passage to support their central idea. Narrative writing should logically extend the passage. For example, the characters introduced in the passage should be present in the narrative. The passage should be used as a springboard for students to build on other elements such as plot to demonstrate understanding of the passage. On both the paper and computer-based tests, there is a limited amount of space for students to write their essay. For the essay responses in grades 6-8 it is 5000 characters or about two pages handwritten. With this fixed amount of space, we want students to use the passages to support their explanation or argument or write their narrative. And while a student will not lose points for outside information, we want students to focus on answering the question.

- The responses should include multiple paragraphs. We will be looking at responses at each score point and you will notice that the higher scores often include more writing. As mentioned earlier, during our passage and item review, we discuss the question and review the scoring notes with our educator committees. The scoring notes give us insight on what we think the students will include so that we can be sure that there is enough for them to write.

Slide 11: Let's talk a bit more about scoring.

- Summaries of passage(s) will receive a 0 for Idea Development and up 3 points for Conventions. This is a case where a student does not answer the question asked such as supporting an argument or explanatory essay or writing a narrative and instead includes a summary of the passage. When looking at the rubric, the zero score for idea development states that "the response shows evidence the student has read the text but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question." With an essay that is a summary of the passage, it is evident that the student read the passage so they can receive up to 3 points in conventions.
- Writing in the wrong mode will receive a 0 for Idea Development and up 3 points for Conventions. This is a case where the student did not address the question in the correct mode. The language of the 0 in the idea development portion of the rubric includes the text that "the response shows evidence the student has read the text but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question." This student can still receive a score in conventions. For example, if the question asks for a narrative, and the student writes a summary that includes details based on the passage, this is showing evidence the student had read the text and they could receive a score in conventions.
- Direct copy from the prompt or passage with no original words from the student will result in a ZERO Score. When we say direct copy, we mean copying full amounts of text and no original words. In this case, we cannot tell if the student read the passage or simply copied it, so they receive a 0. It's important to talk to students about how to use the passage in their responses. We want students to use quotations to build their central idea or use details from the passage in their narratives, but they do need to include their own words too.

Slide 12: The scoring process is thorough and rigorous.

- All MCAS scorers participate and are trained in the responses that they score. What we mean here, is that if a scorer is trained on a grade 8 question, that does not mean they can score all grade 8 questions. They are trained for each question they score.
- Each question has a specific set of training materials, some of which you will see today. Scorers must qualify to score each question – they need to demonstrate that they understand the expectations at each score point.
- Scorers use the passage and question. They review the scoring notes which include possible responses that students might include. They view the scoring guide (the rubric) which articulates expectations at each score point. They look at anchor papers (student responses) at each score point. And finally, they review the Annotations which provide further explanation of the expectations at each score point, using specific language from the scoring guide/rubric. We are going to look at these components more closely later in this presentation. During this training, the scorers are trained/instructed on the grade level question.
- Scoring is continuously monitored using quality control measures like read behinds and embedded responses in order to ensure accuracy in scoring. A read behind is when a member of scoring leadership reads a response after a score has been submitted. This provides the

opportunity to make sure that a scorer is adhering to the standard and overall expectations that have been set.

Slide 13: The MCAS writing expectations for essays are communicated to students through the direction lines and the question.

- The direction lines are standardized for each writing mode and provide guidance to students such as using details and evidence, using correct spelling grammar and punctuation.
- The questions (the essay prompt) also include specific information about what to include in the essay (such as supporting a central idea or writing a narrative) and include a reminder to use details and information from the passage.

Slide 14: First, let's look at narrative essays.

- With the narrative essays, there is a progression in terms of the language that is presented to students. Beginning in grade 5, students are expected to know the term narrative and are prompted to "write a narrative" when they encounter this type of writing prompt.
- Responses should include the narrative elements we saw on the previous slide and should logically extend the passage. Elements such as characters, dialogue, plot, and setting are all expected.
- As mentioned, students that write in the incorrect mode will receive an idea development score of a zero. In the case of narrative writing, this could be a response that starts with "I think that" or outlines a prediction or a summary. In either instance, the student did not write a narrative and did not include the elements of narrative writing (character, setting, dialogue, plot, etc.) that we expect to see in this mode. It is imperative that students are writing in the correct mode. In order to clearly communicate these expectations to students, reminders are embedded in the standardized direction lines and the prompt.

Slide 15: Let's take a look at the narrative direction lines for grades 5 and above. Here, the directions specifically ask students to

- "write a narrative". As I mentioned, beginning in grade 5, students should know the term narrative.
- The directions then go on to direct students to the passage(s).
- And remind students to use characters, settings, events, and other details from the passage and to use the correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

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- For explanatory and argument questions, the key words in the question include explain, evidence, details, argue.
- As we continue to mention, the responses need to be based on the passage and should not include outside information. It will not be scored. We must make sure that all students have access to the same content.
- As we have mentioned, when writing their essays, students should include a central idea. Students should use evidence or details from the passage. As a reminder, this can be in the form of a direct quote or a paraphrase with an explanation to support their central idea.

Slide 17: Throughout this presentation you will need to access the participant packet. This packet includes the passage (pages 1-6), the question (page 7), the rubric (page 10) and the student anchor papers. Today, we will:

- Review the question and direction lines.
- Then we will revisit the scoring guide.
- Read and analyze anchor papers at each score point.

At this point you may choose to pause the presentation to read the passage so that you are familiar with it prior to looking at the student responses. You may also want to review the question, the rubric, and the student anchor papers before we look at these materials more in depth on the upcoming slides.

Slide 18: Today we will be looking at a grade 7 essay question from the 2022 grade 7 test. The question is found on page 7 of your participant pack. The question is: Based on the “The Teen Who Woke up Her School” and “Why Schools Are Struggling to Let Students Sleep In,” write an essay arguing that middle schools and high schools should have later start times. Be sure to use information from both articles to develop your essay. The essay expectations and reminders are embedded in the directions. OK let’s look at the direction lines a bit more closely.

- Students are instructed to write an essay.
- Students are reminded that their answer should be based on the passage.
- Students are directed to present and develop a central idea.
- Students are reminded to provide evidence or details.
- Students are instructed to use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. This speaks to the conventions portion of the rubric.

Slide 19: Now that we’ve seen the question, let’s remind ourselves of the Essay Scoring Guide or Rubric. This can be found on page 10 of your participant packet. We will be scoring each response for idea development and conventions. Please remember, the rubric is not a checklist, and each response is evaluated holistically in how the response meets the overall expectations for idea development and conventions. Each score point includes specific language about each of the bulleted elements and there is a range within each score point. If one of the elements of the rubric is not as strong as the others, it may simply make it a lower score in Idea Development, for example. As we mentioned, we are looking at an abbreviated version of the anchor set (student responses) today so that we can show you examples of scores at each score point for both idea development and conventions. The scorers will see more examples at each score point to ensure they understand the overall range within each score point.

Slide 20: The first response is an example of a student essay where the response scored a 5 in idea development and a 3 in conventions. It is on page 12 of your participant packet. Let’s look at the language of the rubric which is on page 10.

A response receiving a 5 in idea development includes:

- An insightful and fully developed central idea
- Skillful selection and explanation of evidence or details
- Skillful and/or subtle organization
- Rich expression of ideas and
- Full awareness of the task and mode

A response receiving a 3 in Conventions includes:

- Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures
- Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics

The introductory paragraph immediately shows that the student

- has a full awareness of the task and mode by starting with a brief restatement of the prompt, which indicates what the student will be arguing.
- The student then demonstrates a rich expression of ideas by making an insightful commentary about how parents and students disagree about whether school should start later, noted in light blue before advancing the central idea of the essay, which demonstrates that the student writer will argue that later start times would promote better attitudes, allow students to become more alert, and show that not getting enough sleep is natural due to the growing teen. While this sentence could perhaps be better crafted, it is clear what the student will be arguing throughout the essay. Based on the stated central idea, it is also clear that this essay will be organized by ideas, with each body paragraph elaborating on one argument that the student is making for why having later start times would benefit students. Please note that this is just one way to organize an effective essay. We are not looking for a specific structure (such as a 5-paragraph essay), but we do want to see purposeful organization. While the transition word used to begin the first body paragraph could be better chosen and may be a bit distracting, remember that we are looking at these essays holistically and the essay has many strengths. For instance, the paragraph is well organized.
- This first body paragraph is organized by focusing on how sleep is proven to promote better attitudes toward peers” as outlined in red. The student then utilizes both paraphrasing and direct quoting from the articles to support this central idea, as noted in orange underlining, demonstrating a skillful selection of evidence and explanation of ideas.
- The student ends the first body paragraph by noting that they have supported their argument that schools should have later start times by including quote “factual evidence” from the articles, and this claim is supported by both the paraphrasing and the quotations provided.
- Though the second body paragraph also begins with a weaker transition, this paragraph utilizes a similar skillful organizational pattern as the first body paragraph, employing a topic sentence (central idea) that the student then supports via both paraphrased material and direct quotations.
- The student again draws on multiple sources of evidence directly from the article to support the idea that starting school later can lead to students being more alert. The student quotes from the article, “after a good night’s rest you’re more alert and it’s easier to solve problems, process and remember information, and be creative.”
- Quotes and paraphrasing are seamlessly woven into the body paragraph. The explanation is thorough. Also, we can see a nice balance of evidence directly from the text and the student’s own original writing.

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- In the third body paragraph, we can see the student’s central idea is explicitly stated in the first sentence of the paragraph, as was the case in the prior two body paragraphs. This is found in red underline on the slide.
- The student supports this central idea through a skillful selection of evidence which can be found in orange underline--this time the evidence all comes from direct quotations and there is no paraphrasing of the articles.
- Please note the blue underlining in the slide which is intended to show the particularly skillful explanation of the more complex idea of circadian rhythms being a reason teens have difficulty going to bed before 11:00 pm and waking up before 8:00 AM. The student analyzes the direct

quotation and explains that (quote) “hormones make it so that it is extremely difficult for them [teenagers] to go to bed at an early and reasonable time.”

- Finally, the conclusion of the essay restates the student’s central idea, which has been developed throughout the body paragraphs of the essay demonstrating full development of central ideas.
- The paragraph also evidences a rich expression of ideas, as noted in light blue, by acknowledging and refuting a potential argument of those opposed to delaying school start times, when the student states, “Some could argue that ‘The solution is simple: go to bed earlier. But it is not all that simple. Many factors block this, so this fight for a later school start is necessary. The essay shows full awareness of the task and mode.
- For conventions, the student demonstrates consistent control of a variety of sentence structures and grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay, resulting in the essay earning a 3.

Slide 22: Next we will look at an essay that is on the lower end of the 5 score range. This paper received a 5 in idea development and a 3 in conventions and it can be found on page 13 of your participant pack. After reading the introduction, it is clear that the student has full awareness of the task and mode.

- The introduction begins by attempting to capture the reader’s interest in an engaging manner before explaining a reason teens should have later start times and stating that both passages demonstrate that schools should have later start times. While the last sentence of the introduction can be read as something of a restatement of the prompt, it does demonstrate an emerging central idea which will be fleshed out more fully in the topic sentences of the body paragraphs in the essay.
- As we can see, the central idea that schools should have later start times is carried through into the first body paragraph, where the student begins to explain why start times should be later—because quote “Good sleep has been proven to improve your wellbeing as indicated by the red underlining.
- The student supports the central idea that schools should have later start times to enhance student well-being (the student’s topic sentence) through the quotations in orange underline “Sleep is a simple yet powerful potion with the ability to enhance learning, boost creativity, fight infection, fuel growth and balance mood” and “When you’re not exhausted 24/7 you feel better emotionally. Sleep boosts your mood and lowers anxiety.” These quotations demonstrate skillful selection of evidence directly from the article.
- The student then expands upon and explains the selected evidence and connects these ideas back to the central idea as seen in the blue underline.
- The final sentence of the paragraph, underlined in red, reinforces the student’s central idea, as the student has stated that better learning promotes teen well-being. Finally, we can note that this student chose to organize the essay by idea.

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- In the second body paragraph, the student uses a skillful transition to connect the first idea—quote, “better learning” with the student’s second idea that “athletes perform when well rested”. This is noted in the red underline on the slide—the red underline here also notes the central idea of the second body paragraph.
- The student skillfully organizes the ideas throughout the paragraph and skillfully selects evidence to support the central idea as indicated by the orange underlining.
- The student also explains and expands upon the selected evidence as shown in the dark blue underlining.

- In the third body paragraph, we can see the student's central idea is clearly articulated--that student's feel better emotionally and mentally with more sleep. This is found in red underline on the slide.
- The student supports this central idea through a skillful selection of evidence which is underlined in orange and an explanation of evidence in blue underline.
- While the explanation argues a bit beyond the quotation itself, it is the student's attempt to further their central idea that later school start times are beneficial for students. The student demonstrates skillful organization through their argument that getting enough sleep can cause students to feel better emotionally and mentally.
- Finally, the conclusion of the essay restates the student's central idea and attempts to tie together the ideas the student argued throughout the essay. While the conclusion would benefit from further development, it does serve to tie up the student's argument.

For conventions, the student demonstrates consistent control of a variety of sentence structures and grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay, resulting in the essay earning a 3.

Slide 24: The next essay we are going to look at is an essay where the student scored a 4 in idea development and a 3 in conventions. This response is on page 14 of your participant pack.

A response receiving a 4 in idea development includes:

- A clear and well-developed central idea
- Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details
- Effective organization
- Clear expression of ideas and
- Full awareness of the task and mode

A response receiving a 3 in Conventions includes:

- Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures
- Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics

In this introduction, the student demonstrates a full awareness of the task and mode by stating, quote "As shown in "The Teen Who Woke Up Her School" and "Why Schools Are Struggling to Let Students Sleep In", schools should have later start times for their students." Next, the student summarizes how the different articles structure their information on later school start times, with one article making a clear argument that later school start times would be beneficial by utilizing student voices and the other article presenting both the positives side of moving school start times later and also sharing some of the challenges with changing start times. The student writer then states:

- that there are many different reasons why students should be able to have later start times, and there are many benefits." Because the student's statement that there are "many different reasons schools should have later start times" , is not elaborated on in the introduction, the central idea has not yet been clearly expressed, though the student does clearly express a central idea as the essay moves through the body paragraphs, and we can see this sentence in the introduction as an emerging central idea that will be fleshed out better through the body paragraphs.
- The first body paragraph is effectively organized by idea and includes an effective selection and explanation of evidence to support the student's central idea.
- The paragraph expands upon the clear central idea that "Later start times improve teens behaviors, and mental health" (in red underline) through an effective selection of evidence

- and explanation of the benefits of increased sleep and the detrimental effects of insufficient sleep such as “health concerns”.

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- The second body paragraph expands upon the central idea. through an argument that “later start times help increase both academic and athletic performance.”
- Relevant quotations are woven throughout the paragraph,
- and the student provides clear, and effective explanations, (particularly about how academic health is improved through sleep) to develop the central idea. Though the student could provide more evidence for how athletic performance is improved through sleep, the essay does acknowledge that sleep can help people “be energized rather than drowsy.” Further elaboration about how later start times could improve athletic performance would have improved this essay.
- Lastly, the effective conclusion states that “Later start times increase sleep times, which helps academic and athletic learning, and better emotional and physical health.” The student reiterates the essay prompt in the concluding paragraph, which demonstrates full awareness of the task and mode but doesn’t provide any new insights or information.

The 4 essay differs from the two 5 essays in both the amount of evidence included and in the explanation of evidence and details. The central idea is well-developed and the selection and explanation of evidence, (and the organization of ideas) are effective.

For conventions, the student demonstrates consistent control of a variety of sentence structures and grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay resulting in the essay earning a 3.

Slide 26: Let's take a look at an essay that scored a 3 in Idea Development and a 3 in Conventions. This response is on page 15 of your participant pack. A response receiving a 3 in idea development includes:

- general and moderately developed central idea
- Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence/details to demonstrate understanding of text
- Moderate organization
- Adequate expression of ideas
- Sufficient awareness of the task and mode

Similar to the other responses we have already looked at the conventions score is still demonstrating

- Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures and
- Consistent control of grammar, usage and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay

The introduction to the essay is brief and yet shows sufficient awareness of the task and mode.

- The central idea states three reasons teens need more sleep and is moderately developed throughout the essay.
- The first body paragraph begins by stating the central idea that “starting school later is good for you . . . Because studies have shown that when kids get more rest, they are more likely to be happier emotionally.” This is underlined in red. The chosen quotation from the article appropriately supports the student’s central idea, though the explanation is sparse, just indicating that the student has provided examples to show that quote “sleep can help you socially.”

- The second body paragraph moderately develops the central idea by arguing quote “sleep has been found to help children academically”, as underlined in red .
- The student selects multiple quotations to support this central idea and explanations are present, though less developed than at the 4 level. Still, the explanations of the quotations are appropriate, demonstrating an adequate expression of ideas.
- The third body paragraph expands on the central idea that starting school later is beneficial for students for athletic reasons.
- Unlike the prior two paragraphs, the third body paragraph utilizes paraphrasing to assert that “Jilly’s high school finally went to the state champs after not going for 11 years because the athletes were well rested” and that “it is proven that well rested athletes are less likely to get injured”. For these reasons, the student explains, sleep “helps students athletically too, even if they might have a little less time for practice”, as underlined in blue.
- The essay ends somewhat abruptly with a single sentence, which, although short, does serve to reiterate the central idea that was moderately developed mainly through the body paragraphs of the essay.

Though this essay is shorter than the previous essays, it has enough length and complexity to earn a 3 in conventions. The student is able to demonstrate consistent control of varying sentence structures, grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Slide 27: Let's look at an essay found on page 16 that scored a 2 in Idea Development and a 2 in Conventions. Let’s look at the language of the rubric. The rubric is on page 10. A response receiving a 2 in idea development includes:

- A central idea that is present and somewhat developed
- Limited selection and explanation of evidence/details to demonstrate understanding of text
- Limited organization
- Basic expression of ideas
- Partial awareness of the task and mode

Now let’s look at the conventions score point 2. The conventions score point 2 shows

- Mostly consistent control of a variety of sentence structures AND
- Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
- In the 2/2 essay, there is no introduction or conclusion, the essay contains two body paragraphs. The student demonstrates a partial awareness of the task and mode through the first sentence of the essay, which is an abbreviated version of the prompt that doesn’t address the benefits that students would derive from having later start times.
- In the first body paragraph, the central idea is present and the student argues that “with a later start time some problems could be fixed”. This sentence evidences a more vague central idea in which the problems that could be fixed isn’t clearly specified.
- The second body paragraph also argues a central idea that is less specific when it says, quote “Another reason why teens should have a later start time is because without enough sleep they won’t function as well.”
- The student supports this idea with a single quotation from the passage and the explanation of evidence reads a bit like a restatement of the quotation itself. Selection and explanation of

evidence are limited throughout the essay as noted in orange and blue underline. In addition, organization is limited throughout the essay.

Essays in the lower score points tend to struggle with going beyond a statement of a simplistic central idea. These essays often rely on summary instead of explanation and use quotes (sometimes heavily) to advance the central idea.

For conventions, there is too little original writing to demonstrate consistent control of conventions. As a result of the brevity of the response, the student is unable to demonstrate consistent control of varying sentence structures, grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Slide 28: Let's now take a look at an essay that scored a 1 in Idea Development and a 1 in Conventions that is found on page 17. Let's look at the language of the rubric. A response receiving a 1 in idea development includes:

- A central idea that is not developed
- Insufficient evidence/details to demonstrate understanding of text
- Minimal organization
- Poor expression of ideas
- Minimal awareness of the task and mode

The conventions score point 1 shows

- Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure
- Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay
- In this essay, the central idea is introduced in the first sentence.
- The central idea is not developed, and evidence is insufficient to support the central idea. Overall, the response is too brief to demonstrate more than minimal awareness of task and mode. The response shows minimal organization with only one body paragraph and only minimal attempts at explanation (underlined in blue).
- For conventions, the response is too brief to demonstrate more than little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Though there are few errors, there is too little original text to provide evidence of control of conventions and there is little variety in sentence structure.

Slide 29: Finally, let's take a look at an example of an essay that scored a zero in both idea development and conventions. This essay response is found on page 18 of your participant pack.

The language of the rubric for a response receiving a 0 in idea development states that the response shows evidence the student has read the text but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

A response receiving a 0 in Conventions has sentences that are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and/or the response is insufficient in length. There is some evidence that the student read the excerpts. However, the response is very brief and is insufficient to answer the question. For conventions, the essay demonstrates no evidence of control of standard English conventions resulting in a score of 0.

Slide 30: Now that we have analyzed essays in each of the score points, let's go over some key takeaways for Idea Development and Conventions.

- The central idea should respond to the essay prompt and be fully developed throughout the essay.
- Relevant evidence from the passage or passages should be purposefully selected and expanded upon. Evidence can be quoted, paraphrased, or a mix of both. The essay should also show original thinking in analyzing the evidence, and the student's ideas should be developed and expanded upon throughout the essay.
- The essay should show purposeful organization, as we saw in the anchor papers. There is no requirement for a specific number of paragraphs, but fully developed essays generally include multiple paragraphs.
- Ideally, rich expression of ideas should be evident through the student's use of language, style, voice, and grade-level vocabulary.
- An awareness of task and mode should be evident almost immediately in the introduction and throughout the essay.
- In conventions, the essay should demonstrate consistent control of a variety of sentence structures and consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length of the essay. The essay does not have to be error-free to earn a 3 in Conventions, but it should demonstrate consistent control.

Slide 31: At this point, you are welcome to independently read and score the responses in your participant packet. We have included an example at most of the score points.

- First revisit the question and passage. You can refer to the passage which is found on pages 1-6 of your participant packet and the question, which is on page 7, as needed.
- Then you will read the student response A. Use the anchor papers found on pages 12-18 of your participant packet and the scoring guide on page 10 to score the response. Both of these resources are essential when scoring responses. Scorers have these readily available and refer to them as they score each response.
- As you score the response, look at the anchor papers and determine which response it is most similar to, based on the expectations at each score point for both idea development AND conventions.
- Then you will choose the overall score for idea development and conventions. You will follow this process for each of the response papers.

Please pause this presentation and score responses A through E in this manner. After you have read and scored each of the papers, please resume the presentation.

Slide 32: Here is Response A, which is on page 20 of the participant packet.

- This paper scored a 3 in idea development and a 3 in conventions.
- It is most similar to Anchor 3/3 on page 15.
- Now let's take a look at why this paper was scored this way. From the first line of the essay in the introduction it is clear that the student writer has sufficient awareness of task and mode.
- In the next line, the student asserts their three reasons that both middle school and high school students should have later start times. The student moderately develops the central idea that school start times should be later because "Kids would get more sleep, focus more, and be able to handle a busy schedule better."

- We see this central idea carried through in the body paragraphs of the essay, each of which has a central idea in the first sentence, quotations or paraphrasing for support (noted in orange underline), and a simple explanation.
- The conclusion restates the central idea that the student has argued in the three body paragraphs, demonstrating moderate organization.

For conventions, the student demonstrates consistent control of a variety of sentence structures and grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay resulting in the essay earning a 3.

Slide 33: Here is Response B, which is on page 21 of the participant packet.

- This paper scored a 4 in idea development and a 3 in conventions.
- It is most similar to Anchor 4/3 on page 14 of your participant packet.

As a reminder, every score point has a range, and this paper is on the lower end of the 4 score range. Let's take a look at why. From reading the introduction, it is immediately clear that the student has a full awareness of the task and mode.

- The central idea is clear and provides an outline of ideas the student will discuss further in the essay.
- Another interesting aspect of this introduction is that it introduces additional paraphrased support to bolster the student's argument that later start times are beneficial to students, as you can see in the orange underline, when the student suggests that not having enough sleep affects a teen's ability to focus.
- The body paragraphs are organized by idea where the student discusses the reasons students would benefit from later school start times.
- The selection and explanation of the evidence and the organization of the essay are effective. Ideas are expressed clearly. You will notice that the explanations in this paper are slightly more robust than both the anchor 3 and Response A, and that the quotations are more seamlessly woven into the paper, making this paper read in a less formulaic manner.
- The conclusion reiterates the central idea revealing that "middle schools and high schools should have later start times because of the stages of puberty teens go through and the benefits sleep gives to teenagers and students."

For conventions, while this paper has some errors present and may be on the lower end of the 3 range, the length and complexity of the essay are enough to show a consistent control of a variety of sentence structures, grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Slide 34: Here is Response C, which is on page 22 of the participant packet.

- This paper scored a 1 in idea development and a 1 in conventions.
- It is most similar to Anchor 1/1 on page 17.
- This response has a statement of central idea that is undeveloped. The student says that "teenagers are hardwired naturally fall asleep later at night and wake up later in the morning" though the response offers little support related to circadian rhythms, other than to say that it is "biologically unrealistic for a teenager to fall asleep before 11:00 PM."
- The student response includes two paraphrased ideas from the article as evidence, but the evidence is insufficient to develop the central idea that schools should have later start times. Lastly, the response indicates minimal organization, containing only three sentences.

For conventions, this response is insufficient in length to demonstrate control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Slide 35: Here is response D, which is on page 23 of the participant packet.

- This paper scored a 2 in idea development and a 2 in conventions.
- It is most similar to Anchor 2/2 on page 16
- The response has a central idea that is somewhat developed throughout the brief essay as indicated in the red underline.
- Similar to the 2 anchor, there is a limited selection and explanation of evidence. You'll note that the explanations at the score point sometimes read like a restatement of the quotation and do little to advance the essay.

For Conventions, the response shows mostly consistent control of sentence structures, grammar, usage, and mechanics. Some errors are present throughout the brief response and the student has not provided enough of their own writing to demonstrate more than mostly consistent control of conventions.

Slide 36: Here is Response E, which is on page 24 of the participant packet.

- This paper scored a 0 in idea development and a 0 in conventions.
- It is most similar to Anchor 0/0 on page 15 of your participant pack.

This response earned a zero because it shows evidence that the student may have read the article, but it does not address the question. Though the student may have read the prompt, the vague statement "the point of this story is to say not to wake up teens because they get really moody" does not correctly answer the question.

In conventions, there is no control of sentence structure, grammar, or mechanics. This concludes the scoring portion of the webinar. Thank you all for participating.

Slide 37: We wanted to share some ELA web resources with you that may be useful.

- ELA Rubrics: These were shown today and are included for essays by grade-band in grades 3-5, grade 6-8 and grade 10.
- Student Work Samples and Annotations: These are the materials we looked at today. For each released essay we include a sample set of score responses (the anchors) along with annotations that outline the expectations at each score point using the rubric. This is an excellent resource to use and look at other responses or essays that we have released in the past. We have up to 5 years' worth of material.
- Released Questions: These are found in the Resource center and include released passage and questions. They are displayed in the platform that the students use when taking the MCAS tests. This is something we encourage you to use with your students to simulate the testing experience. For example, students can type their response in the essay box and submit it. Educators can print the score page at the end to see individual students' responses.
- ELA Test Designs: The ELA test design includes the components of the ELA test. The design includes information about the question types, the number of questions and points and the reporting categories. As we've mentioned, the Essay questions align to a writing and language standards and will be reported on through the writing and language reporting category.

- And finally, we have a slide deck posted that includes information about MCAS ELA essays with a focus on narrative writing at the elementary and middle school levels.

Slide 38: We wanted to share our contact information with you in case you think of any other questions you'd like answered.

- You can see our direct web page on the screen. We moved to a new building earlier this year and now are in Everett. Although we have moved, our phone numbers is the same. Our email address has changed. It is mcas@doe.mass.gov and email addresses have stayed the same.
- For policy questions such as test designs or accommodation or general questions, you can reach the Department by email or phone. We have also noted our MCAS main page where other information including test administration resources and general MCAS updates can be found.
- If you need logistical support, including tech support on the testing platform, please contact the MCAS Service Center

Slide 39: On behalf of the Department, we thank you for viewing this webinar.