

## The 2013-14 TCAP Writing Assessment: Using the Revised Rubric

### Introduction and trait-based scoring:

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), in collaboration with Measurement, Inc. (MI), has developed revised rubrics to score the 2013-14 TCAP Writing Assessment prompts. The rubrics are built directly from the language of the Writing Strand from the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. These rubrics are similar to the 2012-13 rubrics, but have been slightly tweaked to make them clearer and more user-friendly. Rubrics are also now differentiated by grade band as well as writing mode. These rubrics will be used for all writing tasks that the TDOE will make available for district use during the 2013-14 school year, including the Writing Assessment.

There are rubrics for both informational/explanatory and opinion/argument prompts. The rubrics are trait-based, which means that student writing will be scored according to a number of specific and separate criteria instead of a single group of indicators. Trait-based scoring, which will also be used in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments, allows for much more meaningful, individualized student feedback. Score reports from the Writing Assessment will show a student how well he/she performed on each trait. We have not provided a revised narrative rubric because the 2013-14 Writing Assessment will only feature opinion/argument and/or informative/explanatory prompts. Based on data, and feedback that we have received from teachers, opinion/argument and informative/explanatory are the areas in which students need the most practice. Note that PARCC will test all three types of writing, including narrative, and will use its own rubrics. For more information on the PARCC assessment, see the [assessment blueprints](#) and [item and task prototypes](#).

The four traits for all rubrics are: development, focus & organization, language, and conventions. There are four score levels for each trait, and each score level has a series of descriptors (written in bullet point form) describing performance at that level. Note that while the language across the prompts differs in some details to match the specific expectations of the Common Core State Standards for Writing in each mode, there is even more similarity, reflecting an integrated view of writing.

### Learning how to use the rubrics:

One of the best ways for teachers to become familiar with the format of this year's prompts and prepare their students for the kind of writing the prompts call for is to give students practice using the tasks the TDOE will release throughout the 2013-14 school year. Teachers can then score those essays to give students feedback. To help teachers learn how to use the new rubrics to score student essays based on these released tasks, the TDOE will provide supporting materials, including anchor papers (samples of essays gathered from Tennessee students during field tests demonstrating performance at each score point).

### Using the rubrics across grade levels:

These rubrics are written for broad grade bands (3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-12). Teachers should become familiar with the proper grade-level Standards in the grades they teach, and apply that understanding in assessing an essay against the rubric. In cases where there is a significant difference in writing expectations across grades in a given band, the rubric will indicate so in a footnote.

**Scoring:**

In order to use the rubric, a reader should read the essay to be scored and assign an independent point value for each of the traits. As with any rubric, the descriptors for a given score point will rarely all match perfectly with a student essay. For each trait, the totality of the evidence should indicate the score level. Instead of simply tallying the traits for a total score, teachers are encouraged to report each trait score independently in order to provide helpful feedback to students.

While teacher judgment based on experience and knowledge of the standards should still guide scoring decisions at the classroom level, the anchor papers will produce concrete examples of grade-level expectations for each score point and give teachers and students guidance for how the official February administration might be scored.