



Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for Writing Clarifications

Maryland College and Career Ready (MCCR) Standards for Writing Clarifications – Standard 1

The English Language Arts Department at MSDE facilitated teams of educators from across the state to participate in writing Clarifications for the MCCR Standards at grades Pre-K through twelve. These serve as resources to educators across this state and others as we implement these Standards. Educators from the local systems worked together to create clarification statements that make up a coherent document that reflects the instructional shifts necessary to achieve the MCCR Standards. The Clarification statements detail for educators the skills necessary for students to demonstrate proficiency in each grade level standard in Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. These Clarifications are an integral part of the MCCR Standards toolkit.

W1 ANCHOR STANDARD: WRITE ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT CLAIMS IN AN ANALYSIS OF SUBSTANTIVE TOPICS OR TEXTS, USING VALID REASONING AND RELEVANT AND SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE.

Pre-Kindergarten: With modeling and support, use a combination of drawing, dictating and developmentally appropriate writing to share an opinion about an experience or book.

1a: Share the topic or name the book. To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, the teacher reads aloud a literary or informational text, shares a picture or tells about an experience. In a teacher-directed setting, the teacher models how and guides students to name the title of the book or topic of their experience. At this early age, it is essential that students be able to verbally name the book, picture or tell about an experience. This is achieved through teacher think-alouds and modeling. Students should dictate thinking, create drawings and be encouraged to use inventive writing to name a book or share an experience.

1b. Share an opinion on a topic or book. To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, the teacher reads aloud a literary or informational text, shares pictures or tells about an experience. In a teacher-directed setting, the teacher models how and guides students to share an opinion (what the students think or how they feel) about the book or experience. As students become proficient with naming a book or sharing an experience, his/her thinking should be extended by stating an opinion about a book, picture or an experience. This is achieved through teacher think-alouds and modeling. Students should dictate thinking create drawings and be encouraged to use inventive writing to give an opinion about a book or an experience.

Kindergarten - Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book. (e.g. My favorite book is....)

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student forms an opinion about a photograph, a book the teacher reads aloud, one read independently, or a specific topic or experience. In a teacher-directed setting, the teacher models how and guides students to name the title of the book or topic of their experience to include an opinion. The experience could come from literary/informational text or a personal or school-based experience. Students should be able to construct their opinion statement by writing a simple sentence using stems such as:

- I think _____.
- I feel _____.
- I believe _____.

Grade One - Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student must write an opinion that states what they think, feel or believe about a specific topic or experience. It cannot be proven right or wrong. This topic could come from a picture. It could come from literary or informational text that the student has read or has been read to them. The experience can be a school based or a personal experience. An opinion piece can begin with stems such as: I think..., I feel..., or I believe... It may include the word should in the sentence. For example: We should always..., I think our class should..., Our class should.... When the student supplies a reason to their opinion it needs to be directly related to the source. The student will provide closure by writing a sentence that brings their opinion piece to an end by using different words to repeat the opinion in a new way.

Grade Two - Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g. because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student must write an opinion that states what they think, feel or believe about a specific topic or experience. It cannot be proven right or wrong. This topic could come from a picture. It could come from literary or informational text that the student has read or has been read to them. The experience can be a school based or a personal experience. An opinion piece can begin with stems such as: I think..., I feel..., or I believe... It may include the word should in the sentence. For example: We should always..., I think our class should..., Our class should.... When the student supplies two or more reasons to their opinion it needs to be directly related to the source and connected with the use of linking words (e.g., because, and, also). The student will provide closure by writing one or more sentences that brings their opinion piece to an end by using different words to repeat the opinion in a new way.

Grade Three - Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

1a: Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.

To show proficiency of the skill in this supporting standard, a student needs to begin their single paragraph piece with a topic sentence that introduces their opinion on the topic or text (source). The subsequent sentences provide support for the opinion. A final sentence concludes the piece. With guidance students should begin to consider various ways to organize their writing, for example chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution.

1b: Provide reasons that support the opinion.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to demonstrate their understanding of the source with text-based reasons that support their opinion.

1c: Use linking words and phrases (e.g. because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinion and reasons.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to demonstrate their understanding of previously learned linking words and phrases as well as examples provided in the supporting standard to connect their opinion with their reasons. (e.g. Chocolate is the best ice cream because...)

1d: Provide a concluding statement or section.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to demonstrate their understanding by writing a final sentence that restates their opinion and gives the writing a sense of closure.

Grade Four - Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

1a: Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.

To show proficiency of the skill in this supporting standard, a student needs to begin their multi-paragraph piece with a topic sentence that introduces their opinion on the topic or text (source.) The first paragraph introduces the topic or text and clearly states their opinion. The subsequent paragraphs provide support for the opinion. A final paragraph concludes the piece. Students should incorporate various ways to organize their writing, for example chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution.

1b: Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to demonstrate their understanding of the source with text-based reasons, which include facts and details, which support their opinion.

1c: Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (eg., for instance, in order to, in addition).

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to demonstrate their understanding of previously learned linking words and phrases as well as examples provided in the supporting standard to connect their opinion with their reasons. (e.g. Chocolate is the best ice cream because...)

1d: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to write a final paragraph that provides a sense of closure by reminding the reader of the topic and the opinion stated in the writing piece.

Grade Five - Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

1a: Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer’s purpose.

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard a student needs to craft a strong introduction that engages the reader. The student writer should strive to grab the reader’s attention by speaking directly to the reader, asking an engaging question, or using a real-life situation. Other ways to do this include mentioning an unusual fact, telling an anecdote or brief story, or including lively descriptions. Students should craft an appropriate title that introduces the topic clearly. The writer should state a personal opinion about the topic or text and be focused on that opinion throughout. This statement does not need to be the first sentence of the essay but should appear in the first paragraph. Students should choose an organizational structure that supports the writer’s purpose (to inform, persuade, entertain, or teach a lesson). Possible organizational structures include cause/effect, problem/solution, description, compare/contrast.

1b: Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to understand that personal opinions should be based on provable facts and details. Well-organized writing helps the reader follow the logic of the opinion presented. The body paragraphs should have unity, meaning that each paragraph each paragraph gives more information about the main idea of the entire essay. Each paragraph should provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details. Facts may be pulled from encyclopedia, reliable internet sources, and other nonfiction text. Details should include sensory ideas and images obtained from personal experience, prior knowledge, or nonfiction text. The most salient reasons, facts, and details should be placed early in the essay or paragraph in order to draw the most attention from the reader.

1c: Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to use appropriate transitions to guide the reader through the text. These transitions can be selected to complement the organization of the piece: cause/effect; problem/solution; description; or, compare/contrast. Commonly used transitions are shown below.

- Cause/Effect: So, Because, Since, Therefore, If...then, This led to, Reason why, As a result, May be due to, Effect of, Consequently, For this reason
- Problem/Solution: Question is..., Dilemma is..., The puzzle is..., To solve this..., One answer is..., One reason for the problem is...
- Description: For instance, Such as..., To begin with, An example, To illustrate, Characteristics
- Compare/Contrast: Same as, Similar, Alike, As well as, Not only...but also, Both, Instead of, Either...or, On the other hand, Different from, As opposed to

1d: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented. The conclusion should connect with the beginning of

the written response, share a final thought, and restate the main idea or opinion provided. A strong conclusion gives the reader something to think about after reading the piece of writing.

Grade Six - Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

1a: Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to clearly differentiate between a claim and an opinion. A claim is written as a statement obtained from research and based on evidence that can be proven; whereas, an opinion is written from the writer’s perspective, and is based on the writer’s thoughts and/or feelings. When introducing the claim, attention should be given to the title to ensure that it is appropriate and clearly introduces the argument. The argument should be focused on one particular claim. The claim statement does not need to be the first sentence of the essay but should appear in the first paragraph. The writer should create an organizational structure that supports the purpose for writing. Possible organizational structures include cause/effect, problem/solution, description, compare/contrast. Evidence should begin with the most important details in order to more definitively prove the argument.

1b: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to ensure that the information included in the argument follows a logical order, placing the most salient pieces of information earlier in the essay. A well-organized essay helps the reader follow the logic and reasoning of the argument. The body paragraphs within the essay should have unity, meaning that each paragraph gives more information about the main idea, or claim, of the argument. Reasons and evidence should be both relevant and credible, demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. The credibility of a source can be determined by evaluating the background of author, author’s affiliations, author’s expertise, author’s personal experience, author’s research (primary vs. secondary sources). Additionally, students can identify the purpose of the source, the sponsor of the source, the impact of the source (Who benefits from the message?), the response a reader might take to the message, the ideas/values/information/point-of-view of the message, and whether the information is fact or opinion.

1c: Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to use appropriate signal words and phrases to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons. A list of frequently used signal words can be found at www.mdk12.org. By clearly illustrating the link between reasons and the writer’s claim, the argument makes logical sense to the reader.

1d: Establish and maintain a formal style.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to write as an expert on the topic. By using advanced vocabulary, longer sentences, and eliminating contractions, personal pronouns, and slang, the writer establishes and maintains a formal style.

1e: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to provide a concluding statement or section related to the argument presented. A strong conclusion connects with the beginning of response, shares a final thought, and restates the main idea or claim provided. A strong conclusion gives the reader something to think about after reading the piece of writing.

Grade Seven - Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

1a: Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

To show proficiency for this substandard, incoming 7th graders should be able to make a clear claim and support it with clearly organized evidence. During 7th grade, however, students should now begin to acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, understanding that the omission of alternate or opposing claims could be viewed by the audience as a weakness or as deliberate dishonesty in the argument. The reasons and evidence for the argument should be not only organized clearly, but now students should pay special attention to the logic of their organization.

1b: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

To show proficiency of the skills in this substandard, students should continue to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. In 7th grade, students must make sure that their reasoning and evidence logically supports their claim, demonstrating that their position, belief, or conclusion is valid. Students should continue checking the credibility of their sources and should now evaluate the accuracy of their findings in order to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the topic or text.

1c: Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.

To show proficiency of the skills in this substandard, students will continue to use words, phrases, and clauses to clearly show relationships among their claims and the reasoning behind their claims. However, now students are expected to create cohesion in their argument, showing unity among claims, reasons, and evidence. Previously, students were expected to show relationships solely among claims and their reasoning for such claims. Showing how evidence logically supports their claims and the reasoning for such claims will strengthen their argument.

1d: Establish and maintain a formal style.

For this substandard, there are no differences between 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Maintaining a formal style means that students should avoid informal or conversational language and should make sure that they adhere to standard conventions. The challenge here is for students to maintain a strong and clear voice to command the attention and interest of readers/listeners while still producing an academically appropriate text.

1e: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented

To show proficiency of this substandard, incoming 7th graders should be able to provide a concluding statement, but students are now expected to focus on providing a conclusion that better supports the argument they've presented. To support their argument, students may choose to provide a brief restatement of their argument, a related observation or quotation to provoke further thought, or if not previously mentioned, a refutation of a counterclaim can be an effective conclusion.

Grade Eight - Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

1a: Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

To show proficiency for this substandard, students will continue to present a clear claim and support it with clearly and logically organized evidence. Students will also continue to acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, understanding that the omission of alternate or opposing claims could be viewed by the audience as a weakness or as deliberate dishonesty in the argument. In 8th grade, students are now expected to clearly distinguish their claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims.

1b: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text

There are no differences between 7th and 8th grade for this substandard.

1c: Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, and reasons, and evidence.

To show proficiency of the skills in this substandard, students will continue to use words, phrases, and clauses to clearly and cohesively show relationships among their claims, reasons, and evidence. However, now students should also show how their counterclaims are clearly and cohesively related to their claims, reasons, and evidence. The goal is for students to use their words, phrases, and clauses to present a complete and objective argument that shows the logical relationships between their claim, the reasoning behind it, any relevant counterclaims, and the evidence they've collected.

1d: Establish and maintain a formal style.

For this substandard, there are no differences between 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Maintaining a formal style means that students should avoid informal or conversational language and should make sure that they adhere to standard conventions. The challenge here is for students to maintain a strong and clear voice to command the attention and interest of readers/listeners while still producing an academically appropriate text.

1e: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

There are no differences between 7th and 8th grade for this substandard.

Grades Nine and Ten - Write argument to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

1a: Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

1b: Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.

1c: Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between the claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

1d: Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

1e: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student writes arguments which employ persuasive strategies to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. In analysis of text, the student argues the effectiveness of the author's style using text as their relevant and sufficient evidence. In analysis of topic, students must use literary or nonfiction text as their relevant and sufficient evidence. Arguments are to change the reader's point of view, to bring about some action on the reader's part, or to ask the reader to accept the writer's explanation or evaluation of a concept, issue, or problem. They seek to make people believe that something is true or to persuade people to change their beliefs or behavior.

Argument: Appeal to reason, not emotion

Claim: The writer's position on an issue

Support: Reasons and evidence that support the claim.

Students have choice in analyzing topics or texts. When teachers ask students to consider two or more perspectives on a topic or issue, something far beyond surface knowledge is required: students must think critically and deeply, assess the validity of their own thinking, and anticipate counterclaims in opposition to their own assertions. The organization of the writing introduces a one sentence, precise claim, directly stating a fact, value, or policy. It addresses counterclaims and shows relationships among counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Students will anticipate potential objections, based on their understanding of the audience, and create counterclaims within their argument. The student will demonstrate logical organization of his argument by creating seamless transitions between the sections of the argument. Claims and reasons, reasons and evidence, and claims and counterclaims are clarified and qualified. Since the student is appealing to reason, he takes an objective stance while adhering to the norms and conventions of formal style (revise). The student will write a conclusion (a statement or section) that serves as a culmination of the claim and that supports the argument presented.

Grades Eleven and Twelve - Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

1a: Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establishes the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

1b: Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

1c: Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

1d: Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

1e: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, students will define an argument as an essay supporting a claim or assertion recognizing that opposing or alternate interpretations are possible.

Students will:

- Establish focus/unity
- Address opposing views
- Support their claim or assertion with evidence and examples; provide evidence and proof to back their position
- Avoid redundancy
- Establish logical order
- Display insight, reflection
- Maintain consistent style and tone
- Anticipate audience questions
- Use active voice and standard grammar and punctuation, building on 9th and 10th grade skills
- Use age, topic or grade level appropriate vocabulary
- Have an obvious paragraph structure with topic sentences and supporting details
- Produce a clean, clear, final draft.
- Support and establish a position on an essential topic or central text.
- Develop a well-organized structure
- Address the pros and cons of the argument; refute the opposing side and provide a better alternative