

MDE Suggestions on Preparing for the MCA

It's good to remember (be reminded of) the importance of circling back to different topics discussed in the past because learning isn't a one-and-done situation. As such, here's a list of "oh... that's right, the MCA is around the corner" different topics that have been discussed. This review highlights topics that (we believe) will be helpful as schools and districts turn a bit of their attention to the MCA's.

Without further ado, four topics, in no particular order, to remember/review (all in MathBits):

MDE Math Sense-Making Series: Culture & the MCA → This article addresses quite a few things but "option b" in the list directly deals with Sense Making in Assessments. There is a link to the webinar we did on [Using Sense-Making to Prepare for the Math MCA](#). The video is ~45 minutes and there's a [folder of resources](#) educators can use to help them start implementing some of the ideas presented.



Major take away: More worksheets ≠ more learning. Do fewer "practice problems" but do them in a way that students are making sense of the situation ([try 1 of the 3 methods mentioned](#)) .

Where the heck are those math item samplers? → If you or other educators you know have been using the item samplers for the last however many years, you need to read the article. MDE rolled out the [Student Readiness Tool \(SRT\)](#) and for the last few years have had the [Minnesota Questions Tool \(MQT\)](#) with HUNDREDS of released MCA items for educators to access. While the MQT is not intended to be used by directly by students, it is meant for educators to have access to how test questions are written to reflect the breadth of the standards and benchmarks. Use these questions as starting places.



Major take away: 100% on the old item sampler ≠ more prepared. Instead, go through the [SRT](#) with students to improve confidence and flexibility (and here's a [MathBits article on the MQT](#)).

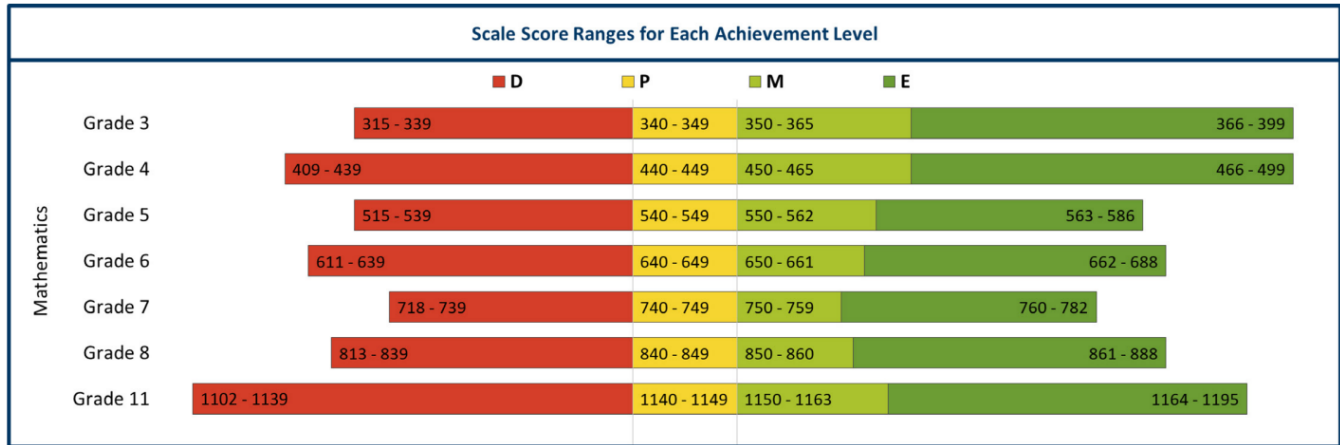
BALDs: So it turns out that we've written at least 3 MathBits Articles on the [Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors](#) a.k.a. the "BALDs", created a [module](#), done [webinars](#), and [created resources about them](#). This means our confidence is really high that this information MAKES.A.DIFFERENCE (¯_('ツ)_/¯).

1. [What does "Meets the Standard" really mean?](#)
2. [Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors – Diving In](#)
3. [Next Step with the BALDs?](#)



Major take away: The [Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors](#) provide a general rubric for each of the benchmarks in grades 3-8 and high school on a scale of "Does Not Meet" to "Exceeds." Use it to review instructional materials throughout the school year.

(Mis)Understanding scale Scores on the MCA → One of the benefits of online testing is that student scores are ready within 60 minutes of a student completing testing. These scores are given as an Achievement Level as well as in numeric form. It's important to note that not every grade starts at 00 and ends at 99. Please see the article and pass around the [Understanding Scale Scores document from MDE](#) (the image below comes from this). Lastly, while not being in the final processed form of the scores provided in August/September from MDE, they are reliable.



Major take away: DO NOT SUBTRACT SCORES FROM ONE YEAR TO THE NEXT. USE THE ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS.

We welcome all comments, questions, and celebrations! Please contact us if any arise. Thank you!

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