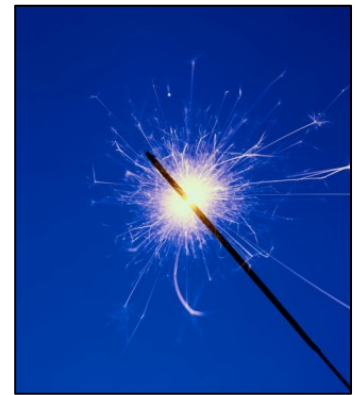


# The Nevada “Sparklers” Writing Contest

for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and students



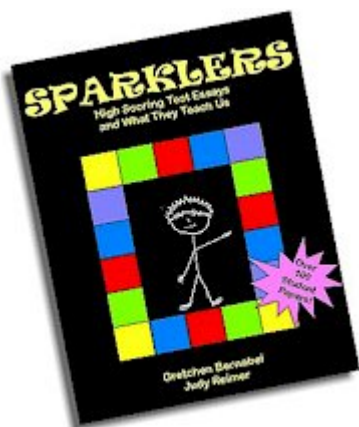
It’s important to practice (but not over-practice) before your students take their Nevada Writing Examinations. The Northern Nevada Writing Project and the Northwest Regional Professional Development Program have co-created a set of three practice prompts for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to use in the Fall before their students take the writing test. We’ve included actual scored samples that show student work at various levels; the scored samples are thoroughly annotated, which we believe gives the teachers the ability to self-score their own students’ practice prompts to inform instruction.

We are recommending 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers do the following during the Fall of 2009:

- Assign practice prompt #1 in September; work with a team at your school to score the papers; have students set goals for the next practice prompt, and design instruction that will help students meet their goals.
- Assign practice prompt #2 in October; work with a team at your school to score the papers; have students set goals for the next practice prompt, and design instruction that will help students meet their goals.
- Assign practice prompt #3 in November; work with a team at your school to score the papers; have students set goals for the state test, and design instruction that will help students meet their goals.

Posted Practice Prompts for 5 <sup>th</sup> grade: narrative	Posted Practice Prompts for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade: narrative**
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Think about a time when something special or unusual happened at school. It could be a time when something unexpected happened in your classroom. Or it could be any event at school that you remember well. Write about what happened and why it was special or unusual.</li> <li>2. It’s always a pleasure to give and receive gifts. Sometimes the gift is a present. Sometimes the gift is something someone does for you or someone else. What is the best gift you have ever given or received? Tell about a time you gave or received a gift and why that gift was important to you.</li> <li>3. Remember a time when you did something that made you feel proud of yourself. Think about what you did and how you felt about it. Try to remember the details clearly in your mind. Then write about what you did, including the sights and sounds of the moment.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Books, movies, and television can offer opportunities to learn valuable lessons. Write about a lesson learned from a book, movie, or television show that proved to be of value to you.</li> <li>2. Describe a favorite toy or object from your childhood. Try to remember its color, shape, texture, smell, and sound. How did it make you feel?</li> <li>3. We all have done things that, when we look back, we would have done differently. Recall a time when you did or said something you wished you could erase and do over. Explain what you did, and tell what you’d do differently.</li> </ol>
<p>The practice prompts above, as well as additional resources that help teachers assign the prompts and score the samples, can be found at WritingFix’s <i>Preparing For a Writing Examination</i> Homepage. To find this page, go to WritingFix (<a href="http://writingfix.com">http://writingfix.com</a>), hover over “Writing Traits” on the left-hand, blue navigation bar, then click on “Resources for the Nevada Writing Exam.”</p>	

## Our Contest!



It’s amazing how powerful a strong, student-made writing sample can be when teaching a skill-based writing lesson. Inspired by Gretchen Bernabei’s new book Sparklers: High Scoring Test Essays and What They Teach Us, we are hosting a contest for Nevada teachers who are using the above practice prompts during the Fall of 2009. We’re looking for samples from your classroom that—you believe—should receive a near-perfect score. If you self-score a student sample from your school that seems to be in the 20-ish zone, Xerox the sample and send it to Corbett Harrison (@ RPDP, 380 Edison Way Building, Reno 89502).

We will be selecting one boy “sparkler” and one girl “sparkler” for all six of the above prompts throughout the Fall. Teachers whose students are selected as monthly winners will receive a copy of Sparklers; students who are selected as monthly winners will receive a frame-able certificate, and they will be published in a

new print resource being created for Nevada’s teachers. For complete rules, visit the WritingFix website and look for the picture of Sparklers on the homepage.