Prototype Item Revision

As all writers know well, rarely is anything written that could not undergo revision. This was particularly true of the prototype items. Following training and directions given by assessment specialists of CTB/McGraw-Hill, the item writers wrote approximately 80 items. These items were then examined and revised by MSDE and CTB personnel in order to give them greater clarity and to ensure that they did measure the indicators they were designed to measure. Attention also was given to readability levels of the items.

The revised items were then assembled into prototype forms, but at no point did revision ever seem to stop. As soon as there was a prototype booklet to examine, content and bias review teams were asked to critique the items, and their suggestions brought additional revisions.

What follows are five items that were revised for a number of reasons. In each case the rewrites resulted in better items. An explanation for each revision is given after the item. See the item analysis chart for additional information about items that were revised.

Item 8
Indicator 3.1.3

- Read this quotation from the story.
  --- No more the mysterious shadows of the kitchenette, the uncharted twists, the unguessed halls.
- Which of the nouns in this quotation is <u>not</u> modified by another word?
  --- shadows
  --- kitchenette
  --- twists
  --- halls

- Read this quotation from the story.
  --- No more the mysterious shadows of the kitchenette, the uncharted twists, the unguessed halls.
- Which of these words is <u>not</u> used to modify another word in the quotation?
  --- mysterious
  --- kitchenette
  --- uncharted
  --- unguessed

The question of what is a modifier becomes tricky when considering articles.   An early draft of this item had no correct response if *the* is included as a modifier. To keep the original question, the phrase "other than *the*" or "other than an article" would need to be added. If the term "article" is used in the stem, then why not use "adjective"? The answer to that question — because it is the concept, modification, that is being tested, not grammar vocabulary — makes the revision a better item.

Item 11
Indicator 1.3.3

• **In Part I of the poem, the poet uses all of the following phrases to create a playful tone <u>except</u>** --- **like a cartoon-mouse (line 7)** --- **little lizard feet (line 9)** --- **his tail curled under him (line 14)** --- **his catlike ears (line 15)**	• **Which word <u>best</u> describes the tone created by the phrases "like a cartoon-mouse" (line 7) and "little lizard feet" (line 9) in Part I of the poem?** --- **mocking** --- **disgusting** --- **playful** --- **despairing**

Students may not agree that any of the words quoted in the response options of the original version of this item create a playful tone. What response could they select, then, as the correct response? Being given a limited number of phrases to consider, as in the revised version, <u>can</u> lead a student to the correct response. Also, creating a negative question ("All of the following except . . .") can be problematic for students.

Item 22
Indicator 3.2.2

- **What does the word *shelter* in Sentence 5 imply?**
  - --- **The structures were new.**
  - --- **People were living in tents.**
  - --- **The structures were temporary.**
  - --- **People were protected from the weather.**

- **In Sentence 5, what does the word *basic* imply about the shelters?**
  - --- **They were large.**
  - --- **They were comfortable.**
  - --- **They were plain.**
  - --- **They were old-fashioned.**

While struggling to write plausible distractors, item writers and reviewers finally recognized that the connotative word in Sentence 5 was *basic*, not *shelters*. As a noun, the latter always implies a structure. Focusing on *basic* made it possible to write plausible distractors and a correct response.

Item 27
Indicator 2.3.3

- **Because futuristic plots appeal to her, Arielle enjoys science fiction.**
  - **Arielle, who enjoys science fiction because futuristic plots appeal to her.**
  - **Because Arielle enjoys science fiction.**
  - **When futuristic plots appeal to her, Arielle enjoys science fiction.**
  - **Best as is**

- **Because futuristic plots appeal to her, Arielle enjoys science fiction.**
  - **Arielle, because futuristic plots appeal to her, enjoys science fiction.**
  - **Enjoying science fiction, futuristic plots appeal to Arielle.**
  - **Arielle enjoys science fiction when futuristic plots appeal to her.**
  - **Best as is**

The answer choices of the original did not fit the Sentence Correction format, which states that a student will select the best revision of the underlined part. The first two options are not plausible as revisions because they are non-sentences. Thus, more than indicator 2.3.3 (revising for clarity, completeness, and effectiveness) was being addressed since the students would also be considering 3.1.4 (distinguishing sentences and non-sentences).

Item __29__
Indicator __3.1.4__

- **The jagged coastline of the Chesapeake Bay with numerous inlets and waterways**
  - --- offers protection to various forms of wildlife.
  - --- with various forms of wildlife
  - --- and various forms of protected wildlife
  - --- Best as is

- **The jagged coastline of the Chesapeake Bay with numerous inlets and waterways.**
  - --- The jagged coastline of the Chesapeake Bay has numerous inlets and waterways.
  - --- The jagged coastline of the Chesapeake Bay creating numerous inlets and waterways.
  - --- The jagged coastline of the Chesapeake Bay, with its numerous inlets and waterways.
  - --- Best as is

The original version of this item did not follow item specifications for revising the underlined part. The correct response of the original is the only one that completes the given
sentence — including a period! The second and third options dealt only with the prepositional phrase.