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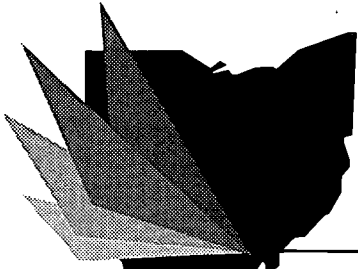
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ABSTRACT

Beginning in February 1994, twelfth-grade students who have passed the Ohio Ninth-grade Proficiency Tests in all areas will take the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Tests in writing, reading, mathematics, and citizenship. This fact sheet describes the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Test in writing, which is designed to measure a twelfth-grade level of literacy as defined by 18 learning outcomes developed by Ohio educators and adopted by the State Board of Education in 1988. For instructional purposes, the 18 outcomes can be clustered into content, organization, language, and writing conventions. As writing samples are scored, a careful balance of these four categories is sought, while holistic scoring emphasizes the importance of the overall impression of the writing. The writing component of the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Tests consists of two writing prompts to which students respond with original samples of writing. The selection of the types of writing differs from year to year. The scoring rubric is a 6-point numerical scale on which numbers represent different levels of writing proficiency based on the 18 learning outcomes. Readers are employed by an independent testing company contracted by the state of Ohio, and they rely on rangefinder papers selected by state educators. Students are encouraged to prewrite and to edit drafts as they respond to the two prompts. (SLD)

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Ohio Proficiency Tests for Grade 12

Writing • Reading • Mathematics • Citizenship

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Fact Sheets

Twelfth-grade Writing

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What are the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Tests?

Beginning in February 1994, twelfth-grade students who have passed the Ninth-grade Proficiency Tests in all areas will take the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Tests in writing, reading, mathematics, and citizenship. The twelfth-grade tests will be administered once annually in February; there will be a make-up period after the regular administration for any students missing the regular administration.

The purpose of the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Test in Writing is to measure a twelfth-grade level of literacy as defined by the eighteen learning outcomes. A committee of Ohio teachers and citizens went through a consensus-building process to develop these learning outcomes, which were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1988.

What are the twelfth-grade learning outcomes?

In a piece of writing, the student will:

1. Convey a message clearly related to the prompt (topic or description of situation).
2. Establish a main idea.
3. Include relevant and clearly developed supporting ideas or examples.
4. Follow a logical order.
5. Use paragraphing to make the logical order clear.

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6. Establish a smooth flow of ideas.
7. Convey a sense of completeness.
8. Choose words appropriate to the audience, the purpose, and the subject.
9. Include precise language.
10. Use sentences of varied length and pattern.
11. Use language as an expression of self.
12. Produce complete sentences (although some purposeful fragments are acceptable).
13. Maintain subject-verb agreement.
14. Use standard forms of verbs and nouns.
15. Use clear pronoun reference.
16. Use appropriate internal and end punctuation.
17. Use correct spelling and capitalization.
18. Use legible handwriting.

What do the learning outcomes mean for students?

For instructional purposes, the outcomes can be clustered into four broad categories. These categories are:

Content (outcomes 1-3),
Organization (outcomes 4, 6, and 7),
Language (outcomes 8-11), and
Writing Conventions (outcomes 5, 12-18).

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These categories are defined as follows:

CONTENT measures student ability to convey a message using supporting ideas and examples.

ORGANIZATION measures student ability to think logically and to present ideas clearly and effectively.

LANGUAGE measures student ability to express a sense of self by choosing words and phrases appropriate to a given purpose and a specific audience.

WRITING CONVENTIONS measures student ability to use the mechanics of standard English to convey content successfully.

Holistic scoring is an efficient and fair method for evaluating student writing. Readers using this method consider the papers as a whole, using the individual elements of the rubric as a guide. Evaluators are looking for the integration of all four elements of good writing: content, organization, suitability of language, and use of writing conventions. Weaknesses in one area may be compensated for by strengths in another; however, high-scoring papers demonstrate strength in all four areas.

As writing samples are scored, a careful balance of these four categories is sought. Holistic scoring emphasizes the overall impression of the writing in keeping with the sense that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Since the writer produces a draft, the writing may contain errors in any of the four areas. The overall effect of the paper, however, should not be limited by such errors.

What can students expect on the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Test in Writing?

The writing component of the Twelfth-grade Proficiency Tests consists of two writing prompts (assigned writing topics) to which students will respond by producing original samples of writing. Students will write in response to both prompts directly in the answer booklet. Although these papers will not be considered final drafts, they should contain evidence of good organization, clear supporting details, control of language, and appropriate use of conventions. While considerable development is expected, content is more important than length or form. The prompts are designed to generate narrative, expository, and persuasive writings; each test will contain two of these three different types.

The selection of the types of writing will differ from year to year. One year students might write to a persuasive prompt and a narrative prompt; another year students might write to an expository

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prompt and a persuasive prompt. No information will be available prior to the test about which type of writing will appear on the test. Students must be prepared to relate an incident, explain an idea, and to convince someone of a point.

How are the papers scored?

Each student's written response to each prompt is scored holistically by two readers trained specifically for this project. A paper receiving the same score from both readers is assigned that score (i.e., if both readers give the paper a 5, the score is recorded as a 5). If adjacent scores are assigned (a 4 and a 5, for example), the scores are averaged (making a 4.5). If more than one number separates the two scores (a 3 and a 5, for example), the paper goes to a third reader for resolution. The scores for the two written responses from each student are then summed and reported.

The rubric, or score-point description, adopted in the state of Ohio for evaluating student writing is based on the eighteen learning outcomes listed previously and uses a six-point numerical scale described below.

What is the rubric for holistic scoring?

The rubric is a numerical scale ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 6. These numbers represent the different levels of writing proficiency demonstrated based on the eighteen learning outcomes.

These are designed to be used in conjunction with illustrative anchor papers (to be included in the practice test materials available in late spring 1993) and are intended to describe characteristics of most papers at a particular score point. The aim is to determine the best fit; a paper at any given score point may not meet all characteristics.

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Rubric for Ohio Twelfth-grade Proficiency Test

- 1** The paper is only slightly connected to the prompt and does not address the audience. There is little supporting detail or example. Development of ideas is inconsistent, inadequate, or illogical. Organizational structure or direction is not apparent. Vocabulary is so simple and sentence structure is so repetitive that no individual style or voice emerges. Control of usage and conventions such as spelling (of commonly used words), capitalization, and basic punctuation is so minimal as to impede understanding.
- 2** The paper is somewhat related to the prompt. Although there is very little development, few reasons or examples appear. There is scant evidence of a controlling structure. Limited or inappropriate vocabulary inhibits the reader's understanding, and sentence structure is repetitive, so that a personal style or voice is not identifiable. Lack of control of conventions often impairs understanding.
- 3** The paper demonstrates an awareness of the prompt, but extraneous or loosely-related details are included. There is some development of the topic. A clear but simple organizational structure is apparent although the focus may shift or the paper may lack a sense of wholeness. More varied vocabulary and sentence structure contribute to an emerging personal style and voice. The convention errors make understanding difficult.
- 4** The paper is generally related to the prompt; detail and development are generally logical but may be uneven. The organizational structure of the paper supports the other elements adequately and has some sense of wholeness although some drifting may occur. Word choice and sentence structure are interesting and contribute to the sense of an individual style and voice. There is some awareness of audience. And while there may be convention errors, they seldom impede understanding.
- 5** The paper focuses on the prompt. Ample details are specific and relevant; development of the topic is logical. The organizational structure is coherent and conveys a sense of wholeness. Word choice is precise and diverse; sentence structure is varied. A clear personal style and voice and an awareness of audience are apparent. Those mechanical errors that may be present do not impair understanding.
- 6** The paper is clearly focused on the prompt. Development of the topic is rich, as evidenced by analytic thinking and a natural flow of ideas. The organizational structure is coherent with a sense of wholeness. Vocabulary, both in breadth and precision, is chosen carefully to achieve the purpose, and sentence structure is generally varied and mature, contributing to an identifiable personal style and voice. The paper demonstrates consideration of audience. While there may be errors in mechanics, they do not interfere with understanding.
- NR** The following are categories of papers that cannot be scored: off task (complete disregard for the writing task as identified by the prompt), completely illegible, in a language other than English, or no response.

Who are the readers?

Readers are employed by an independent testing company contracted by the state of Ohio. The company meets the rigorous standards set by the state. The readers must participate in training sessions to familiarize themselves with the expectations of student writing as defined in the rubric and as illustrated in rangefinder papers.

What are rangefinder papers?

Ohio educators, including classroom teachers and representatives from the Ohio Department of Education, make up the rangefinder committee that reads student papers from the twelfth-grade field test and chooses papers that represent each level of writing proficiency as defined in the rubric. Prior to scoring, the committee meets with representatives of the scoring company to read, score, and discuss student papers so that the contractor representatives have a clear idea of how Ohio teachers expect the papers to be scored. The papers chosen are used to train readers and set standards to guide their scoring. Members of the rangefinder committee also travel to the scoring site to observe both the training of readers and the actual scoring.

How is the final score on the writing test reported?

The scores of the two papers are added together, and that score is returned to the school. The actual papers themselves are not returned.

What else do students need to know?

- Students will be encouraged to engage in prewriting and will be provided with ample space for prewriting activity on the answer document.
- Students will not be permitted to use reference materials, whether in print or electronic form (such as thesaurus or spell-check software).
- Students will write with a pen or pencil and not with any other instrument or equipment.
- As part of their editing, students will be permitted to erase or cross out without penalty. Students will be encouraged to edit their initial drafts.

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- Students may use manuscript (print) or cursive writing, but responses must be legible.
- Students will be given both prompts at the beginning of the testing period and may work on either first. Students must be sure to write in the answer section that corresponds to the appropriate prompt.
- Students will have a maximum of two and one-half hours to finish the test. Most of them will be able to complete it within seventy-five minutes.
- This test is administered to seniors who have passed all four of the Ninth-grade Proficiency Tests. These students will be given one opportunity to take the test in February of their senior year.
- To familiarize students with the types of writing prompts found on this test, a practice test will be available after late spring 1993.

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