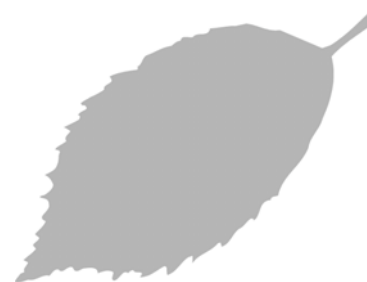


**Massachusetts  
Tests for Educator Licensure<sup>®</sup> (MTEL<sup>®</sup>)**



**Communication  
and Literacy  
Skills (01)  
PRACTICE TEST**

**BOOKLET 2  
Writing Subtest**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

This document is a printable version of the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure® (MTEL®) Communication and Literacy Skills (01) Online Practice Test.

The MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills test consists of a reading subtest and a writing subtest. To pass the Communication and Literacy Skills test, you must pass both the reading and writing subtests.

This practice test for the Communication and Literacy Skills writing subtest is a sample test consisting of 35 multiple-choice questions, 7 short-answer questions, and 2 open-response item assignments.

To assist you in recording and evaluating your responses on the writing section of the practice test, a Multiple-Choice Answer Sheet, a Short-Answer Assignments and Response Sheet, an Answer Key Worksheet, and an Evaluation Chart by test objective are included for the multiple-choice and short-answer items. Sample Responses are also provided for the short-answer items. Evaluation Information and Sample Responses and Analyses, as well as a Scoring Rubric, are included for the open-response items. Lastly, there is a Practice Test Score Calculation Worksheet.

## **PURPOSE OF THE PRACTICE TEST**

The practice test is designed to provide an additional resource to help you effectively prepare for the MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills (01) test. The primary purpose of the practice test is to help you become familiar with the structure and content of the test. It is also intended to help you identify areas in which to focus your studies. Education faculty and administrators of teacher preparation programs may also find this practice test useful as they help students prepare for the official test.

## **TAKING THE PRACTICE TEST**

In order to maximize the benefits of the practice test, it is recommended that you take this test under conditions similar to the conditions under which the official MTEL tests are administered. Try to take the practice test in a quiet atmosphere with few interruptions and limit yourself to the four-hour time period\* allotted for the official test administration. You will find your results to be more useful if you refer to the answer key only after you have completed the practice test.

## **INCORPORATING THE PRACTICE TEST IN YOUR STUDY PLAN**

Although the primary means of preparing for the MTEL is your college education, adequate preparation prior to taking or retaking the MTEL test is strongly recommended. How much preparation and study you need depends on how comfortable and knowledgeable you are with the content of the test.

The first step in preparing to take the MTEL is to identify what information the test will address by reviewing the objectives for your field. A complete, up-to-date list of the Test Objectives is included in the Test Information Booklet for each test field. The test objectives are the core of the testing program and a helpful study tool. Before taking or retaking the official test, focus your study time on those objectives for which you wish to strengthen your knowledge.

\* For the Communication and Literacy Skills test, candidates may take one or both subtests during the four-hour session.

## **Communication and Literacy Skills (01) Practice Test: Writing**

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This practice test may be used as one indicator of potential strengths and weaknesses in your knowledge of the content on the official test. However, because of potential differences in format and difficulty between the practice test and an official MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills (01) test, it is not possible to predict precisely how you might score on an official MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills (01) test. Refer to the Test Information Booklet for additional information about how to prepare for the test.

**COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY SKILLS (01)  
PRACTICE TEST  
WRITING SUBTEST**

## **GENERAL TEST DIRECTIONS**

This practice test consists of two subtests: reading (booklet 1) and writing (booklet 2). Each multiple-choice question on the practice test has four answer choices. Read each question carefully and choose the ONE best answer. Record each answer on the answer sheet provided.

- Sample Question:
1. What is the capital of Massachusetts?
    - A. Worcester
    - B. New Bedford
    - C. Boston
    - D. Springfield

The correct answer to this question is C. You would indicate that on the answer sheet.

The short-answer and open-response items on this practice test require written responses. Directions for the open-response items appear immediately before those assignments.

You may work on the multiple-choice questions and open-response items in any order that you choose. You may wish to monitor how long it takes you to complete the practice test. When taking the actual MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills (01) test, you will have one four-hour test session in which to complete the test.

**MULTIPLE-CHOICE ANSWER SHEET**

**Writing Subtest**

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Your Response</b>
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
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22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	
28	
29	
30	

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Your Response</b>
31	
32	
33	
34	
35	

**DIRECTIONS FOR THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION  
OF THE WRITING SUBTEST**

This multiple-choice section of the writing subtest is based on several passages. For testing purposes, the passages contain numbered "parts" (e.g., sentences, sentence fragments, run-on sentences that should be punctuated as two sentences); these are the "parts" to which the test questions refer. In this part of the writing section, the term *error* refers to language use that does not conform to standard English conventions.

Each passage is followed by several multiple-choice questions related to the passage. Read each passage carefully and then read the questions that refer to that passage. For each question, choose the ONE best answer based on the information contained in the passage you have just read.

For this section, there are 35 multiple-choice questions in all, numbered 1–35. Record your answer to each question on the answer sheet provided in this booklet in the space that corresponds to each question number.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Read the passage below; then answer the three questions that follow.

(Note: An error in paragraph organization has been purposely included in the second paragraph.)

<sup>1</sup>As in so many other places, music in Sub-Saharan Africa is a form of communal expression. <sup>2</sup>Women sing to the rhythm of the mortar pounding corn. <sup>3</sup>Children sing out their games. <sup>4</sup>Religious ceremonies are conducted through song and dance. <sup>5</sup>Weddings, special ocasions, and social gatherings are causes of music and dance. <sup>6</sup>Yet African music is by no means static, and as community needs and experiences have changed, the music of African people has changed too.

<sup>7</sup>This dynamic relationship has been particularly apparent since the end of European

colonialism. <sup>8</sup>In the modern, cosmopolitan African societies of today, the traditional music pulsing beneath the surface has adopted new forms while retaining important functions. <sup>9</sup>Musicians sing about political events and social issues, continuing the custom of using song to convey messages important to the community. <sup>10</sup>In this and other ways, Africans continue to look to their music as a form of communication as well as a source of pleasure and entertainment. <sup>11</sup>They strum electric guitars and play synthesizers, coaxing them to "talk" to the people just as the traditional instruments did.



1. Which of the following changes would make the sequence of ideas in the second paragraph clearer?
  - A. Delete Part 8.
  - B. Reverse the order of Parts 8 and 9.
  - C. Delete Part 9.
  - D. Reverse the order of Parts 10 and 11.

2. Which change is needed in the passage?
  - A. Part 5: Change "of" to "for."
  - B. Part 6: Change "as" to "like."
  - C. Part 7: Change "since" to "during."
  - D. Part 8: Change "beneath" to "around."

3. Which underlined word in the passage is spelled incorrectly?
  - A. ceremonies
  - B. occasions
  - C. experiences
  - D. Musicians

Read the passage below; then answer the four questions that follow.

(Note: An error in paragraph organization has been purposely included in the third paragraph.)

<sup>1</sup>Daily living often seems like one continuous paper trail. <sup>2</sup>Even in this digital age, many of life's everyday activities—reading a magazine, pouring a bowl of cereal, sending a fax—involves the use of paper.

<sup>3</sup>Although people rarely give it much thought the paper we handle so frequently is actually a close link to the past. <sup>4</sup>Indeed, papermaking is a craft that has changed very little in the last 2,000 years and remains a process that almost anyone can perform.

<sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>6</sup>First, you need to decide on the material you want to use. <sup>7</sup>Any fibrous substance such as cornhusks, flax, hemp or cotton rags will do. <sup>8</sup>Another option is to recycle materials such as old newspapers or junk mail lying around the house. <sup>9</sup>The second step is to cut the material into 1- or 2-inch squares and then beat it, either by hand or with a blender, until it has been broken down into tiny fibers. <sup>10</sup>At this point, the fibrous pulp is mixed with water and formed into sheets on a screen. <sup>11</sup>Pressing and drying this new material results in a fully usable sheet of paper. <sup>12</sup>As the water drains through the screen, the individual fibers of the pulp interlock.



4. Which sentence, if added as Part 5, would be the most effective topic sentence of the third paragraph?

- A. Making paper is a good way of recycling waste.
- B. Recent years have witnessed a revival in homemade papermaking.
- C. Making paper requires only a few simple steps.
- D. Sheets of paper can be turned into works of art with a little creativity.

5. Which of the following changes would make the sequence of ideas in the third paragraph clearer?

- A. Reverse the order of Parts 7 and 8.
- B. Reverse the order of Parts 8 and 9.
- C. Reverse the order of Parts 10 and 11.
- D. Reverse the order of Parts 11 and 12.

6. Which change is needed in the passage to correct an error in subject-verb agreement?

- A. Part 2: Change "involves" to "involve."
- B. Part 3: Change "is" to "are."
- C. Part 4: Change "remains" to "remain."
- D. Part 11: Change "results" to "result."

7. Which change is needed in the passage to correct an error in punctuation?

- A. Part 3: Insert a comma after "thought."
- B. Part 4: Delete the comma after "Indeed."
- C. Part 4: Insert a comma after "years."
- D. Part 12: Delete the comma after "screen."

Read the passage below; then answer the four questions that follow.

**(Note: An error in paragraph organization has been purposely included in the second paragraph.)**

<sup>1</sup>The books of William Least Heat-Moon document his personal exploration of America. <sup>2</sup>In *Blue Highways*, he crossed the country using only secondary highways and back roads. <sup>3</sup>A journey that enabled him to explore the variety and richness of small-town American life. <sup>4</sup>In another book, *PrairyErth*, Least Heat-Moon focused on a single county in Kansas, recording its human and natural history, quadrant by quadrant. <sup>5</sup>In addition to delving beneath the surface of the gently rolling landscape to reveal a fascinating geologic story of ancient seabeds turned to stone, he examined the lives of the Kaw people, the settlers, and the farmers who have occupied the land. <sup>6</sup>In yet another work, *River Horse*, he followed the nation's waterways on a journey from New York's Hudson River to Oregon's Columbia River.

<sup>7</sup>In each of these voyages of discovery, Least Heat-Moon provides considerable insight into the character of ordinary people and the unique enviornment of particular places. <sup>8</sup>He has a gift for engaging many different kinds of people in conversation and interacting with people from all walks of life. <sup>9</sup>He is equally adept at laying out the geological and biological underpinnings of a region. <sup>10</sup>Using a few chance remarks heard in a roadside restaurant, he is able to capture the essence of a way of life. <sup>11</sup>As much as the people living there, the hills and valleys, plants and animals come alive as well. <sup>12</sup>Readers finish each book feeling that they have not just visited each place, they have established a personal connection with it.



8. Which part of the passage contains a redundant expression of ideas or information?
- A. Part 5
  - B. Part 6
  - C. Part 7
  - D. Part 8

9. Which of the following changes would make the sequence of ideas in the second paragraph clearer?
- A. Reverse the order of Parts 7 and 8.
  - B. Place Part 11 after Part 7.
  - C. Reverse the order of Parts 9 and 10.
  - D. Place Part 11 after Part 12.

10. Which part of the passage is a sentence fragment?

- A. Part 3
- B. Part 4
- C. Part 8
- D. Part 9

11. Which underlined word in the passage is spelled incorrectly?

- A. secondary
- B. fascinating
- C. enviornment
- D. essence

Read the passage below; then answer the two questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>Please take a moment to think about what you are sitting on. <sup>2</sup>Is it comfortable? <sup>3</sup>How is it shaped? <sup>4</sup>Does it swivel? <sup>5</sup>Does it support your back? <sup>6</sup>During the course of an average day, few items are taken for granted more than chairs. <sup>7</sup>The fact that they provide interesting insight into the world in which we live too often goes unnoticed.

<sup>8</sup>For thousands of years, chairs were designed as emblems of authority rather than for ordinary use. <sup>9</sup>Until the sixteenth century, most people had to be content sitting on chests, benches, or stools. <sup>10</sup>Those privileged enough to sit in chairs had them

made from ebony, ivory, or gilded wood and draped in expensive materials. <sup>11</sup>Later, when chairs finally became accessible to the general public, its design evolved rapidly to reflect the fashions of the day. <sup>12</sup>Today, there are hundreds of different types of chairs from which to choose. <sup>13</sup>We can sit in rocking chairs, ergonomic chairs, beanbag chairs, and even chairs shaped like eggs, pods, or butterflies. <sup>14</sup>The choice may seem insignificant, but every time we select a chair, we are revealing far more about ourselves than the need to sit down.



12. Which part of the passage contains an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement?

- A. Part 2
- B. Part 7
- C. Part 10
- D. Part 11

13. Which underlined word in the passage is spelled incorrectly?

- A. unnoticed
- B. accesible
- C. hundreds
- D. revealing

Read the passage below; then answer the four questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>At the time of her death in 1960, few people remembered Zora Neale Hurston. <sup>2</sup>In the last 15 years of her life, the talented writer who had earlier captivated critics as well as readers in books such as *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) could barely make a living at her craft. <sup>3</sup>One person who did not forget her was Alice Walker, a young writer from Georgia. <sup>4</sup>Walker first pursued her own literary ambitions at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, where she completed her undergraduate work. <sup>5</sup>Soon after the publication of her first book of poetry in 1968 Walker began urging authors, critics, and publishers to reconsider Hurston's work. <sup>6</sup>She also found the unmarked grave in which Hurston had been buried and paid to have a marker placed over it.

<sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
<sup>8</sup>The nature of that influence is not hard to discover. <sup>9</sup>Although separated by four decades, both writers expose similar themes in their novels. <sup>10</sup>They are particularly concerned about the effects of systematic persecution and the empowerment of the oppressed. <sup>11</sup>Their female characters find power in the beauty of nature and in the relationships they build with other people. <sup>12</sup>They then use that strength to assert their right to be treated decently.



14. Which part of the passage draws attention away from the main idea of the first paragraph?
- A. Part 2
  - B. Part 4
  - C. Part 5
  - D. Part 6

15. Which sentence, if added as Part 7, provides the best transition from the first paragraph to the second paragraph?
- A. Although Hurston's conservative politics set her apart from many of her peers, she had an enormous influence on people who knew her.
  - B. Walker fully appreciated the role Hurston had played in the Harlem Renaissance and the development of African American literature.
  - C. Hurston was not only a gifted writer but an accomplished ethnographer whose work as a folklorist received critical acclaim.
  - D. Walker did these things as a way of paying tribute to someone who had strongly influenced her own development as a writer.

16. Which part of the passage contains an error in word usage?
- A. Part 3
  - B. Part 4
  - C. Part 9
  - D. Part 11
17. Which change is needed in the passage?
- A. Part 2: Insert a comma after "readers."
  - B. Part 5: Insert a comma after "1968."
  - C. Part 6: Insert a comma after "buried."
  - D. Part 11: Insert a comma after "nature."

Read the passage below; then answer the three questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>Just as English has grammatical rules for arranging vowels and consonants into recognizable words, American Sign Language (ASL) has its own rules for arranging handshapes and movements into understandable signs. <sup>2</sup>As with any other language communication in ASL requires that one learn the grammar along with the vocabulary. <sup>3</sup>The most significant difference is that grammar in ASL is entirely visual.

<sup>4</sup>A person communicating in ASL begins by making a particular shape with the hand. <sup>5</sup>Standardized sign languages have been used in some countries since the seventeenth century.

<sup>6</sup>Handshapes often have more than one meaning, however. <sup>7</sup>In such cases, the whole sign, including where and how the handshape is positioned and moved, make the meaning clear. <sup>8</sup>For example, one handshape with three meanings begins with the index finger of the right hand pointed across the person's face with the palm toward the face and the other fingers held in a fist. <sup>9</sup>While the hand is moved across the face from left to right, the index finger is curled into a bent position. <sup>10</sup>If this is executed across the forehead, it means "summer." <sup>11</sup>At nose level, it means "ugly," and at chin level, it means "dry."



18. Which part of the passage draws attention away from the main idea of the second paragraph?

- A. Part 5
- B. Part 7
- C. Part 9
- D. Part 10

20. Which change is needed in the passage?

- A. Part 2: Insert a comma after "language."
- B. Part 3: Insert a comma after "ASL."
- C. Part 7: Delete the comma after "cases."
- D. Part 9: Delete the comma after "right."

19. Which part of the passage should be revised to correct an error in subject-verb agreement?

- A. Part 1
- B. Part 4
- C. Part 7
- D. Part 11

Read the passage below; then answer the three questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>Born in 1899 in Washington, D.C., Edward Kennedy Ellington became interested in music at an early age. <sup>2</sup>By the time he was 20, he had formed his first band and acquired the nickname "Duke," by which he would be known for the rest of his life. <sup>3</sup>The band's reputation began to take off during the late 1920s, when it started playing at Harlem's Cotton Club, one of the most famous nightspots of the era. <sup>4</sup>Many of the shows were broadcast on the CBS radio network, and people all across the country enjoyed the band's music. <sup>5</sup>Ellington crafted more than 1,000 orchestrations during his long career. <sup>6</sup>A European tour in the 1930s added to the musician's fame.

<sup>7</sup>\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>8</sup>This renown rested largely on his ability to couple his musical virtuosity with another of his great interests: the history of African Americans. <sup>9</sup>Particularly notable was his 1963 musical pageant, *My People*. <sup>10</sup>To the accompaniment of Ellington's music, people onstage enacted the historical progress of African Americans. <sup>11</sup>The same performers who began the production by representing enslaved people concluded by depicting professionals and national leaders. <sup>12</sup>Dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr., it was the Duke's tribute to the civil rights movement that was in the process of transforming U.S. society.



21. Which part of the passage draws attention away from the main idea of the first paragraph?
- A. Part 3
  - B. Part 4
  - C. Part 5
  - D. Part 6

22. Which sentence, if added as Part 7, provides the best transition from the first paragraph to the second paragraph?

- A. Ellington brought a completely new sort of music to European audiences.
- B. Ellington's music was marked by an innovative combination of improvisation and orchestration.
- C. Thus did Ellington ascend to the pinnacle of his profession.
- D. In time, Ellington would be acclaimed as one of the nation's greatest composers.

23. Which of the following revisions is needed to correct an error in the use of apostrophes?

- A. Part 3: Change "bands" to band's."
- B. Part 6: Change "1930s" to "1930's."
- C. Part 8: Change "Americans" to Americans'."
- D. Part 10: Change "Ellington's" to "Ellingtons."

Read the passage below; then answer the three questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>Some of the first casualties of the feminist movement of the 1960s were so-called "women's crafts" such as crochet and knitting. <sup>2</sup>At a time when women were being called on to break gender barriers and pursue careers in male-dominated fields in which few women had previously worked, the idea of sitting at home and knitting a sweater seemed old-fashioned. <sup>3</sup>Unfortunately, abandoning knitting meant sweeping aside an activity with a long tradition of skill and artistry in which talented knitters had demonstrated their proficiency and skill for many years. <sup>4</sup>Today, women all over the United States are rediscovering the joys of knitting, they are rediscovering its benefits as well.

<sup>5</sup>Between 2000 and 2008, the number of knitters under the age of 35 increased by more than 400 percent. <sup>6</sup>Part of this surge can be traced

to the 2003 publication of a hip knitting handbook by *Bust* magazine's Debbie Stoller. <sup>7</sup>The book took a subversive look at knitting history and repositioned the craft as a source of feminist pride. <sup>8</sup>Suddenly, knitting came into fashion again. <sup>9</sup>Young women formed clubs in cities across the country to combine cocktails, knitting, and the discussion of issues affecting their lives.

<sup>10</sup>Others have embraced knitting as an antidote to the frantic pace of modern living. <sup>11</sup>Research has shown that knittings' repetitive action offers many of the same benefits as meditation, including lowered blood pressure, less anxiety, and a reduced incidence of headaches. <sup>12</sup>Whatever people's reasons for taking up this relaxing and satisfying hobby, the ancient art of knitting has definitely enjoyed a twenty-first-century resurgence.



24. Which part of the passage contains a redundant expression of ideas or information?
- A. Part 1
  - B. Part 3
  - C. Part 11
  - D. Part 12

25. Which part of the passage contains a run-on sentence?

- A. Part 2
- B. Part 4
- C. Part 9
- D. Part 11

26. Which change is needed in the passage?

- A. Part 1: Change "women's" to "womens'."
- B. Part 6: Change "magazine's" to "magazines'."
- C. Part 11: Change "knittings'" to "knitting's."
- D. Part 12: Change "people's" to "peoples'."

Read the passage below; then answer the three questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry is one of the most famous regiments in U.S. military history. <sup>2</sup>Formed in 1863 and composed almost entirely of African Americans, it was commanded by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, a young white officer from Boston.

<sup>3</sup>The 54th Massachusetts participated in some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. <sup>4</sup>The most memorable of these engagements was the regiment's frontal assault on fort Wagner in South Carolina, where its performance won the regiment renown and respect throughout the Union army.

<sup>5</sup>Colonel Shaw was among those killed in the battle. <sup>6</sup>As soon as the war ended, his family and Boston's African American leaders began planning a memorial to honor the regiment. <sup>7</sup>Sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens initially proposed a freestanding statue of Shaw on a horse, but the colonel's family felt such an image would be inappropriate. <sup>8</sup>Saint-Gaudens eventually decided on a giant relief that would represent the entire regiment. <sup>9</sup>More than a century later, the monument continues to transfix visitors to Boston. <sup>10</sup>When completed, it showed Shaw on a horse surrounded by rows of marching soldiers, each of who was depicted with exquisite detail.



27. Which of the following changes would make the sequence of ideas in the third paragraph clearer?
- A. Delete Part 6.
  - B. Reverse the order of Parts 7 and 8.
  - C. Delete Part 9.
  - D. Reverse the order of Parts 9 and 10.

28. Which change is needed in the passage?
- A. Part 2: Change "it was" to "they were."
  - B. Part 4: Change "its" to "their."
  - C. Part 8: Change "that" to "which."
  - D. Part 10: Change "who" to "whom."

29. Which part of the passage contains an error in capitalization?
- A. Part 1
  - B. Part 3
  - C. Part 4
  - D. Part 10

Read the passage below; then answer the two questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>The Coast Redwood probably inspires more awe than any other plant species. <sup>2</sup>Redwoods, as most people call them, grow to an astonishing height, survive for centuries, and have characteristics that have enabled them to thrive since the time of the dinosaurs. <sup>3</sup>They are among the oldest living things on the planet, and individual specimens reach an age of more than 2,000 years. <sup>4</sup>The bark on these botanical skyscrapers grows to an extraordinary thickness—about one foot in mature trees.

<sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>6</sup>In these ancient groves, beneath the canopy

formed by the giant trees, a lush variety of vines, ferns, wildflowers, and smaller deciduous trees grow and flourish. <sup>7</sup>Extending from northern California into southernmost Oregon, one can find these woodlands in a limited geographic area that tree experts call the *coastal fog belt*. <sup>8</sup>In summer, great fogs roll in off the Pacific Ocean and linger over the redwood forests into the afternoon, when the sun finally burns them off. <sup>9</sup>Come evening, more fog rolls in, bringing with it the smell of the sea and contributing to an air of grandness and mystery that visitors say inspires a hushed reverence among those who come to marvel at the great trees.



30. Which sentence, if added as Part 5, would be the most effective topic sentence for the second paragraph of the passage?

- A. Forests that consist mainly of redwoods are truly magnificent sights.
- B. Much of the country's remaining redwood forest is protected in state and national parks.
- C. At one time, redwood forests covered vast areas of the California coast.
- D. Redwoods grow best in climate zones with warm temperatures and high humidity.

31. Which part of the passage contains a misplaced modifier?

- A. Part 6
- B. Part 7
- C. Part 8
- D. Part 9

Read the passage below; then answer the four questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>For many years, Hispanic fiction published in the United States consisted mainly of English translations of works by a handful of Latin American literary stars such as Carlos Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa. <sup>2</sup>Fuentes' more notable works include *The Death of Artemio Cruz* and *The Old Gringo*. <sup>3</sup>In the mid-1970s, a new literature written by U.S. Hispanics began to appear. <sup>4</sup>It was not long before these authors were receiving recognition and winning literary prizes. <sup>5</sup>As they did, the "brown curtain"—the term describes the publishing industry's neglect of work by U.S. Hispanics—gradually came down.

<sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>7</sup>They were Cubans born in Miami, Puerto Ricans born in New York, and Mexican Americans raised along the Rio Grande; some were of central and South American descent. <sup>8</sup>They did not write with a single voice, but they did share one important characteristic: all of them were bringing a dual cultural perspective to the experience of being American.



32. Which sentence, if added as Part 6, would be the most effective topic sentence for the second paragraph?

- A. These writers formed a diverse group.
- B. These writers had little in common.
- C. These writers had considerable talent.
- D. These writers were very productive.

33. Which part of the passage draws attention away from the main idea of the first paragraph?

- A. Part 2
- B. Part 3
- C. Part 4
- D. Part 5

34. Which underlined word or words in the passage should be replaced by a more appropriate verb form?

- A. written
- B. were receiving
- C. raised
- D. were bringing

35. Which part of the passage contains an error in capitalization?

- A. Part 1
- B. Part 3
- C. Part 7
- D. Part 8

**DIRECTIONS FOR THE SHORT-ANSWER SECTION  
OF THE WRITING SUBTEST**

The short-answer section of the writing subtest consists of seven questions. Each question asks you to revise text that contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation). For each item, rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. In addressing the errors, you may restructure the syntax of the original text, but the essential elements (e.g., names, places, actions) and relationship among those elements (e.g., cause/effect, before/after) must be maintained. Your rewrite should not introduce any new errors in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation. Note that proper names of people and places are correctly spelled within the text.

Write or print your responses on the response sheet in the space that follows each question.

**SHORT-ANSWER ASSIGNMENTS AND RESPONSE SHEET**

36. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

Neither Albert nor Martin have completed the assignment, they do expect to meet the deadline.

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37. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

When someone has a hard time saying no they may find life very stressful.

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38. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

The stores all raised prices as a result of the gasoline shortage, this was the reason we have had fewer tourists this year.

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39. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

A distinguished scholar and a great teacher, Professor Smith's famous lecture on the pyramids are not to be missed.

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40. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

Susan shopped for clothes in Michigan Avenue and then demonstrated her new outfit to all of us.

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41. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

Each of the courses I'm considering require so much work that I'm concerned about the affects all that studying will have on my health.

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42. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

During the Summer, my brother get up early and goes to the beach every Saturday morning.

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## DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE OF THE WRITING SUBTEST

This section of the writing subtest presents a passage for you to summarize in your own words. The passage can be found on the next page. Prepare a summary of approximately 100 to 150 words.

Your summary should effectively communicate the main idea and significant supporting details of the passage in your own words. You are expected to identify the relevant information and communicate it clearly and concisely without introducing your own ideas.

Your summary will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **FIDELITY:** The extent to which the response accurately and clearly conveys the main ideas and significant supporting details of the original passage.
- **CONCISENESS:** The extent to which the response is of appropriate length, containing enough specificity to convey the main ideas and significant supporting details, while omitting insignificant content.
- **EXPRESSION:** The extent to which the candidate uses his or her own words to clearly and coherently convey the main ideas and significant supporting details.
- **GRAMMAR AND CONVENTIONS:** The extent to which the response shows control in the use of standard English conventions.

The final version of your summary should conform to standard English conventions, should be written legibly, and should be your own original work.

Write or print your response in the space provided following the exercise.

## WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

Use the passage below to prepare a summary of 100–150 words.

An elementary school principal in Seattle, Washington, recently announced that she had discovered a secret disciplinary weapon: crackers and peanut butter. Whenever children are sent to her office for misbehavior during the pre-lunch hours, she asks if they have eaten breakfast. In most cases, the youngsters have not had anything to eat, and the provision of a secret snack goes a long way towards remedying the behavioral problem. Unfortunately, situations like this are not isolated occurrences, and it is time to find a permanent solution to the problem of hunger and food insecurity in our schools.

There are numerous physical, emotional, and behavioral consequences of not getting enough food. Children in food-insecure households are more likely to experience ear infections, headaches, stomachaches, and other health problems than children from food-secure households. They generally have difficulty making friends, often exhibiting antisocial behavior as well as increased levels of irritability and anxiety. All of these problems clearly detract from a child's ability to succeed in a learning environment. In one national study, kindergarten children from households without sufficient food were shown to score lower on pre-assessment tests and to learn less over the school year than other children. Hungry children at all grade levels also have a much higher rate of absences and suspensions.

School breakfast programs offer one of the most promising solutions to the problem. Many of those currently in place, however, are structured in ways that make them less successful than they could be. Often, children do not arrive at school early enough to participate. They may face a social stigma for eating breakfast at school. A more successful variation provides all children a free meal in their classroom at the start of the school day. With all of the students in a school participating, the program soon becomes an accepted part of everyone's daily routine that takes no longer than 10 to 15 minutes each morning and gives children the healthy start they need to perform successfully in the classroom.

It is unfair to expect children to behave well and engage in learning when they are hungry. Although the solution to this problem already exists and could have remarkably far-reaching effects if more fully implemented, legislators in many states have been reluctant to take the steps necessary to correct the problem. One way to push them in the right direction is by changing public perceptions of government-subsidized child nutrition programs. Rather than viewing such programs as mere handouts, we need to start seeing them as an investment in the nation's future.





## DIRECTIONS FOR THE COMPOSITION EXERCISE OF THE WRITING SUBTEST

This section of the writing subtest consists of one writing assignment. The assignment can be found on the next page. You are asked to prepare a multiple-paragraph composition of approximately 300 to 600 words on an assigned topic.

Your composition should effectively communicate a whole message to the specified audience for the stated purpose. You will be assessed on your ability to express, organize, and support opinions and ideas. You will not be assessed on the position you express.

Your composition will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **APPROPRIATENESS:** The extent to which the response addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
- **MECHANICAL CONVENTIONS:** The extent to which words are spelled correctly and the response follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
- **USAGE:** The extent to which the writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.
- **SENTENCE STRUCTURE:** The effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors.
- **FOCUS AND UNITY:** The clarity with which the response states and maintains focus on the main idea or point of view.
- **ORGANIZATION:** The clarity of the writing and the logical sequence of ideas.
- **DEVELOPMENT:** The extent to which the response provides statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and/or accuracy.

The final version of your composition should conform to standard English conventions, should be written legibly, and should be your own original work.

Write or print your response in the space provided following the exercise.

## COMPOSITION EXERCISE

### COMPOSITION EXERCISE

Read the passages below about grouping students according to academic ability; then follow the instructions for writing your composition.

#### **Ability Grouping Is an Appropriate Educational Practice**

Classroom instruction is most effective when it takes into account the different ability levels of students. Schools that don't use ability grouping often fail to provide appropriate challenges for gifted students or to identify the special needs of students who may not be able to keep pace with their peers. Grouping by academic ability also enables teachers to deliver instruction effectively in a way that best meets the needs of all students.

#### **Ability Grouping Is Not an Appropriate Educational Practice**

The potential costs of ability grouping clearly outweigh its benefits. Schools do not have a reliable way of determining individual potential, and many students are placed in groups that expect less of them than they can actually achieve. Moreover, ability grouping frequently attaches negative labels to students, undermining their self-esteem and creating self-fulfilling prophecies about their future academic performance.

Your purpose is to write a persuasive composition, to be read by a classroom instructor, in which you take a position on whether or not students should be grouped according to their academic ability. Be sure to defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.









## **PRACTICE TEST RESULTS**

## PRACTICE TEST RESULTS OVERVIEW

The practice test provides valuable information regarding your preparedness for the MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills (01): Writing subtest. In this section, you will find information and tools to help you determine your preparedness on the various sections of the test.

### Multiple-Choice Question and Short-Answer Section

A Multiple-Choice Question and Short-Answer Section Answer Key Worksheet is provided to assist you in evaluating your multiple-choice and short-answer responses. The worksheet contains five columns. The first column of the worksheet indicates the multiple-choice question or short-answer item number, the second column indicates the objective to which the test question was written, and the third column indicates, for multiple-choice questions, the correct response. The remaining columns are for your use in calculating the number of multiple-choice questions and short-answer items you answered correctly or incorrectly. Sample Responses are also provided for the short-answer items.

An Evaluation Chart for the multiple-choice questions and short-answer items is also provided to help you assess which content covered by the test objectives may require additional study.

### Open-Response Items

Evaluation Information, Sample Responses and Analyses, as well as a Scoring Rubric are provided for these items. You may wish to refer to this information when evaluating your practice test responses.

### Total Test

Practice Test Score Calculation information is provided to help you estimate your score on the practice test. Although you cannot use this practice test to precisely predict how you might score on an official MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills: Writing subtest test, you may be able to determine your degree of readiness to take an MTEL test at an operational administration. No passing score has been determined for the practice test.

**MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION AND SHORT-ANSWER SECTION  
ANSWER KEY WORKSHEET**

**Multiple-Choice Section**

Question Number	Objective Number	Correct Response	Your Response	
			Correct?	Incorrect?
1	0007	D		
2	0008	A		
3	0009	B		
4	0007	C		
5	0007	D		
6	0008	A		
7	0009	A		
8	0007	D		
9	0007	C		
10	0008	A		
11	0009	C		
12	0008	D		
13	0009	B		
14	0007	B		
15	0007	D		
16	0008	C		
17	0009	B		
18	0007	A		
19	0008	C		
20	0009	A		
21	0007	C		
22	0007	D		
23	0009	A		
24	0007	B		
25	0008	B		
26	0009	C		
27	0007	D		
28	0008	D		
29	0009	C		
30	0007	A		

**MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION AND SHORT-ANSWER SECTION  
ANSWER KEY WORKSHEET (continued)**

**Multiple-Choice Section**

Question Number	Objective Number	Correct Response	Your Response	
			Correct?	Incorrect?
31	0008	B		
32	0007	A		
33	0007	A		
34	0008	D		
35	0009	C		

**Short-Answer Section**

Refer to the Short-Answer Section Sample Responses that follow for descriptions of errors and examples of correct responses.

Question Number	Objective Number	Your Response	
		Correct?	Incorrect?
36 (Error 1)	0010		
36 (Error 2)	0010		
37 (Error 1)	0010		
37 (Error 2)	0010		
38 (Error 1)	0010		
38 (Error 2)	0010		
39 (Error 1)	0010		
39 (Error 2)	0010		
40 (Error 1)	0010		
40 (Error 2)	0010		
41 (Error 1)	0010		
41 (Error 2)	0010		
42 (Error 1)	0010		
42 (Error 2)	0010		

Count the number of multiple-choice questions you answered correctly: \_\_\_\_\_ of 35

Count the number of short-answer question errors you answered correctly: \_\_\_\_\_ of 14

Total multiple-choice and short-answer questions you answered correctly: \_\_\_\_\_ of 49

## SHORT-ANSWER SECTION SAMPLE RESPONSES

36. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

Neither Albert nor Martin have completed the assignment, they do expect to meet the deadline.

**Errors:**

1. lack of subject/verb agreement (*have* instead of *has*)
2. run-on sentence (comma splice)

**Sample Correct Responses:**

Neither Albert nor Martin has completed the assignment. They do, however,  
expect to meet the deadline.

---

Although neither Albert nor Martin has completed the assignment, they still  
expect to meet the deadline.

---

37. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

When someone has a hard time saying no they may find life very stressful.

**Errors:**

1. lack of pronoun/antecedent agreement
2. missing comma after an introductory clause

**Sample Correct Response:**

When someone has a hard time saying no, he or she may find life very stressful.

---

38. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

The stores all raised prices as a result of the gasoline shortage, this was the reason we have had fewer tourists this year.

**Errors:**

1. vague pronoun reference (*this*)
2. run-on sentence

**Sample Correct Responses:**

The stores all raised prices as a result of the gasoline shortage. The gasoline shortage was the reason we have had fewer tourists this year.

---

Since the stores all raised prices due to the gasoline shortage, we have had fewer tourists this year.

---

39. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

A distinguished scholar and a great teacher, Professor Smith's famous lecture on the pyramids are not to be missed.

**Errors:**

1. misplaced modifier
2. lack of subject-verb agreement

**Sample Correct Responses:**

Because Professor Smith is a distinguished scholar and a great teacher, his famous lecture on the pyramids is not to be missed.

---

Professor Smith is a distinguished scholar and a great teacher whose famous lectures on the pyramids are not to be missed.

---

40. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

Susan shopped for clothes in Michigan Avenue and then demonstrated her new outfit to all of us.

**Errors:**

1. incorrect use of a preposition (*in*)
2. use of an inappropriate word (*demonstrated*)

**Sample Correct Response:**

Susan shopped for clothes on Michigan Avenue and then showed her new outfit to all of us.

---

41. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

Each of the courses I'm considering require so much work that I'm concerned about the affects all that studying will have on my health.

**Errors:**

1. lack of subject-verb agreement (*require*)
2. misuse of *affects* in place of *effects*

**Sample Correct Response:**

Each of the courses I'm considering requires so much work that I'm concerned about the effects all that studying will have on my health.

---

42. **The following sentence contains two errors (e.g., in construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained.**

During the Summer, my brother get up early and goes to the beach every Saturday morning.

**Errors:**

1. incorrect capitalization of *summer*
2. lack of subject-verb agreement (*get*)

**Sample Correct Response:**

During the summer, my brother gets up early and goes to the beach every Saturday morning.

---

**MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION AND SHORT-ANSWER SECTION  
PRACTICE TEST EVALUATION CHART**

In the evaluation chart that follows, the multiple-choice questions and short-answer items are arranged in numerical order and by test objective. Check your responses against the correct responses provided to determine how many questions within each objective you answered correctly.

**Multiple-Choice Section**

<b>Objective 0007: Understand methods for establishing and maintaining a central theme or main idea.</b>							
1D ____	4C ____	5D ____	8D ____	9C ____	14B ____	15D ____	18A ____
21C ____	22D ____	24B ____	27D ____	30A ____	32A ____	33A ____	____/15

<b>Objective 0008: Recognize common errors of sentence construction, grammar, and usage.</b>							
2A ____	6A ____	10A ____	12D ____	16C ____	19C ____	25B ____	28D ____
31B ____	34D ____						____/10

<b>Objective 0009: Recognize common errors of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</b>							
3B ____	7A ____	11C ____	13B ____	17B ____	20A ____	23A ____	26C ____
29C ____	35C ____						____/10

**Short-Answer Section**

<b>Objective 0010: Demonstrate the ability to analyze and revise sentences containing common errors of sentence construction, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.</b>							
36 (Error 1) ____	36 (Error 2) ____	37 (Error 1) ____	37 (Error 2) ____				
38 (Error 1) ____	38 (Error 2) ____	39 (Error 1) ____	39 (Error 2) ____				
40 (Error 1) ____	40 (Error 2) ____	41 (Error 1) ____	41 (Error 2) ____				
42 (Error 1) ____	42 (Error 2) ____						____/14

## OPEN-RESPONSE ITEM EVALUATION INFORMATION

### How Open-Response Items Are Scored

Open-response items are scored through a process called focused holistic scoring. Scorers judge the overall effectiveness of the response rather than individual aspects considered in isolation. Scorer judgments are based on the quality of the response, not on length or neatness. Responses must be long enough to cover the topic adequately and scorers must be able to read what is written.

### How to Evaluate Your Practice Responses

On the following pages, you will find two "strong" and two "weak" sample responses for each assignment. PLEASE DO NOT REVIEW THE SAMPLE RESPONSES UNTIL AFTER YOU HAVE WRITTEN YOUR OWN RESPONSE. When you do review the two "strong" and "weak" sample responses and analyses included here, please note the following points:

- ✓ For the purposes of the practice test, responses are identified as "strong" or "weak" rather than given a score point of 1–4.
- ✓ The responses identified as "strong" may contain flaws; however, these responses do demonstrate the performance characteristics of a "strong response."
- ✓ The two "strong" responses demonstrate the examinees' appropriate understanding and application of the subject matter knowledge. However, these responses do not necessarily reflect the full range of "correct answers" that would demonstrate an understanding of the subject matter.
- ✓ The "Analysis" accompanying each "strong" and "weak" response discusses the main attributes of the responses, but does not identify all flaws or strengths that may be present.

Compare your practice responses to the [Sample Responses](#) to determine whether your responses are more similar to the strong or weak responses. Also review the [Analyses](#) on those pages and the [Scoring Rubric](#) to help you better understand the characteristics of strong and weak responses. This evaluation will help you identify specific problems or weaknesses in your practice responses. Further information on scoring can be found in the Test Information Booklet and Faculty Guide at [www.mtel.nesinc.com](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com) and at [www.doe.mass.edu/mtel](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mtel); select "FAQ," then "After the Test."

**OPEN-RESPONSE ITEM  
SCORING RUBRIC, SAMPLE RESPONSES,  
AND ANALYSES**

**Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure®**  
**SCORING RUBRIC FOR COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY SKILLS:**  
**WRITTEN SUMMARY EXERCISE**

**Performance Characteristics:**

Fidelity	The extent to which the response accurately and clearly conveys the main ideas and significant supporting details of the original passage.
Conciseness	The extent to which the response is of appropriate length, containing enough specificity to convey the main ideas and significant supporting details, while omitting insignificant content.
Expression	The extent to which the candidate uses his or her own words to clearly and coherently convey the main ideas and significant supporting details.
Grammar and Conventions	The extent to which the response shows control in the use of standard English conventions.

**Scoring Scale:**

Score Point	Score Point Description
<b>4</b>	<p><b>A well-formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response accurately and clearly conveys all of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage. It does not introduce information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original. Relationships among ideas are preserved.</li> <li>• The response is concise while providing enough statements of appropriate specificity to convey the main ideas and significant details of the original passage.</li> <li>• The response is written in the candidate's own words, clearly and coherently conveying main ideas and significant details.</li> <li>• The response shows excellent control of grammar and conventions. Sentence structure, word choice, and usage are precise and effective. Mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) conform to standard English conventions.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>An adequately formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response conveys most of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage, and is generally accurate and clear. It introduces very little or no information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original. Relationships among ideas are generally maintained.</li> <li>• The response may be too long or too short, but generally provides enough statements of appropriate specificity to convey most of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage.</li> <li>• The response is generally written in the candidate's own words, conveying main ideas and significant details in a generally clear and coherent manner.</li> <li>• The response shows general control of grammar and conventions. Some minor errors in sentence structure, word choice, usage and mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) may be present.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>A partially formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response conveys only some of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage. Information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original passage may substitute for some of the original ideas. Relationships among ideas may be unclear.</li> <li>• The response either includes or excludes too much of the content of the original passage. It is too long or too short. It may take the form of a list or an outline.</li> <li>• The response may be written only partially in the candidate's own words while conveying main ideas and significant details. Language not from the passage may be unclear and/or disjointed.</li> <li>• The response shows limited control of grammar and conventions. Errors in sentence structure, word choice, usage, and/or mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) are distracting.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>An inadequately formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The response fails to convey the main ideas and details of the original passage. It may consist mostly of information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original.</li> <li>• The response is not concise. It either includes or excludes almost all the content of the original passage.</li> <li>• The response is written almost entirely of language from the original passage or is written in the candidate's own words and is confused and/or incoherent.</li> <li>• The response fails to show control of grammar and conventions. Serious errors in sentence structure, word choice, usage, and/or mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) impede communication.</li> </ul>
<b>U</b>	<b>The response is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, not of sufficient length to score, or merely a repetition of the assignment.</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>There is no response to the assignment.</b>

**SCORING RUBRIC FOR COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY SKILLS:  
WRITTEN SUMMARY EXERCISE**

The chart below represents another view of the Scoring Rubric shown on the previous page. This view provides, for each performance characteristic (fidelity, conciseness, expression, and grammar and conventions), a description of the level of performance represented by a response at each score point.

<b>PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS</b>				
	<b>Fidelity</b>	<b>Conciseness</b>	<b>Expression</b>	<b>Grammar and Conventions</b>
	The extent to which the response accurately and clearly conveys the main ideas and significant supporting details of the original passage.	The extent to which the response is of appropriate length, containing enough specificity to convey the main ideas and significant supporting details, while omitting insignificant content.	The extent to which the candidate uses his or her own words to clearly and coherently convey the main ideas and significant supporting details.	The extent to which the response shows control in the use of standard English conventions.
<b>Score Point Description</b>	<b>Fidelity</b>	<b>Conciseness</b>	<b>Expression</b>	<b>Grammar and Conventions</b>
<b>4</b> <b>A well-formed response.</b>	The response accurately and clearly conveys all of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage. It does not introduce information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original. Relationships among ideas are preserved.	The response is concise while providing enough statements of appropriate specificity to convey the main ideas and significant details of the original passage.	The response is written in the candidate's own words, clearly and coherently conveying main ideas and significant details.	The response shows excellent control of grammar and conventions. Sentence structure, word choice, and usage are precise and effective. Mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) conform to standard English conventions.
<b>3</b> <b>An adequately formed written response.</b>	The response conveys most of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage, and is generally accurate and clear. It introduces very little or no information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original. Relationships among ideas are generally maintained.	The response may be too long or too short, but generally provides enough statements of appropriate specificity to convey most of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage.	The response is generally written in the candidate's own words, conveying main ideas and significant details in a generally clear and coherent manner.	The response shows general control of grammar and conventions. Some minor errors in sentence structure, word choice, usage and mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) may be present.
<b>2</b> <b>A partially formed written response.</b>	The response conveys only some of the main ideas and significant details of the original passage. Information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original passage may substitute for some of the original ideas. Relationships among ideas may be unclear.	The response either includes or excludes too much of the content of the original passage. It is too long or too short. It may take the form of a list or an outline.	The response may be written only partially in the candidate's own words while conveying main ideas and significant details. Language not from the passage may be unclear and/or disjointed.	The response shows limited control of grammar and conventions. Errors in sentence structure, word choice, usage, and/or mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) are distracting.
<b>1</b> <b>An inadequately formed written response.</b>	The response fails to convey the main ideas and details of the original passage. It may consist mostly of information, opinion, or analysis not found in the original.	The response is not concise. It either includes or excludes almost all the content of the original passage.	The response is written almost entirely of language from the original passage or is written in the candidate's own words and is confused and/or incoherent.	The response fails to show control of grammar and conventions. Serious errors in sentence structure, word choice, usage, and/or mechanics (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization) impede communication.

**Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure®**  
**SCORING RUBRIC FOR COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY SKILLS:**  
**WRITTEN COMPOSITION EXERCISE**

**Performance Characteristics:**

Appropriateness	The extent to which the candidate addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
Mechanical Conventions	The extent to which words are spelled correctly and the candidate follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
Usage	The extent to which the candidate's writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.
Sentence Structure	The effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors.
Focus and Unity	The clarity with which the candidate states and maintains focus on the main idea or point of view.
Organization	The clarity of the writing and the logical sequence of the candidate's ideas.
Development	The extent to which the candidate provides statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and/or accuracy.

**Scoring Scale:**

Score Point	Score Point Description
<b>4</b>	<p><b>A well-formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate addresses the assignment fully and uses appropriate language and style for the given audience, purpose, and/or occasion.</li> <li>• The candidate shows mastery of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).</li> <li>• Usage and choice of words are careful and precise.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is effective and free of errors.</li> <li>• The candidate clearly states a main idea and/or point of view, and maintains focus and unity throughout the response.</li> <li>• The candidate exhibits control in the organization of ideas.</li> <li>• The candidate develops the response fully by providing ample statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>An adequately formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate addresses the assignment adequately and generally uses appropriate language and/or style for the given audience, purpose, and/or occasion.</li> <li>• There may be some errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).</li> <li>• Minor errors in usage and word choice are evident.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is adequate, although minor errors may be present.</li> <li>• The main idea and/or point of view of the response is generally clear, and focus and unity are generally maintained.</li> <li>• The organization of ideas is generally clear.</li> <li>• The candidate provides a sufficient quantity of statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy to adequately develop the response.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>A partially formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate partially addresses the assignment and may use inappropriate language and/or style for the given audience, purpose, and/or occasion.</li> <li>• The candidate makes frequent errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).</li> <li>• Imprecision in usage and word choice is distracting.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is poor, with noticeable and distracting errors.</li> <li>• The main idea and/or point of view is inconsistent and/or the focus and unity of the discussion are not sustained.</li> <li>• The candidate may make an effort to organize and sequence ideas, but organization is largely unclear.</li> <li>• The response includes very few statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>An inadequately formed written response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate attempts to address the assignment, but language and style are generally inappropriate for the given audience, purpose, and/or occasion.</li> <li>• The candidate makes serious and numerous errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).</li> <li>• Imprecision in usage and word choice interferes with meaning.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is ineffective, and few sentences are free of errors.</li> <li>• The main idea and/or point of view of the response is not identified.</li> <li>• Any organization that is present fails to present an effective sequence of ideas.</li> <li>• The candidate fails to include statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response.</li> </ul>
<b>U</b>	<b>The response is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, not of sufficient length to score, or merely a repetition of the assignment.</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>There is no response to the assignment.</b>

**SCORING RUBRIC FOR COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY SKILLS:  
WRITTEN COMPOSITION EXERCISE**

The chart below represents another view of the Scoring Rubric shown on the previous page. This view provides, for each performance characteristic (fidelity, conciseness, expression, and grammar and conventions), a description of the level of performance represented by a response at each score point.

PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS									
Appropriateness	Mechanical Conventions	Usage	Sentence Structure	Sentence Structure	Focus and Unity	Organization	Development		
The extent to which the candidate addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.	The extent to which words are spelled correctly and the candidate follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.	The extent to which the candidate's writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.	The effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors.	The clarity with which the candidate states and maintains focus on the main idea or point of view.	The clarity of writing and the logical sequence of the candidate's ideas.	The extent to which the candidate provides statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and/or accuracy.			
<b>4</b> A well-formed written response.	The candidate shows mastery of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).	Usage and choice of words are careful and precise.	Sentence structure is effective and free of errors.	The candidate clearly states a main idea and maintains focus and unity throughout the response.	The candidate exhibits control in the organization of ideas.	The candidate develops the response fully by providing ample statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy.			
<b>3</b> An adequately formed written response.	There may be some errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).	Minor errors in usage and word choice are evident.	Sentence structure is adequate, although minor errors may be present.	The main idea and/or point of view of the response is generally clear, and focus and unity are generally maintained.	The organization of ideas is generally clear.	The candidate provides a sufficient quantity of statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy to adequately develop the response.			
<b>2</b> A partially formed written response.	The candidate makes frequent errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).	Imprecision in usage and word choice is distracting.	Sentence structure is poor, with noticeable and distracting errors.	The main idea and/or point of view is inconsistent and/or the focus and unity of the discussion are not sustained.	The candidate may make an effort to organize and sequence ideas, but organization is largely unclear.	The response includes very few statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response.			
<b>1</b> An inadequately formed written response.	The candidate attempts to address the assignment, but language and style are generally inappropriate for the given audience, purpose, and/or occasion.	Imprecision in usage and word choice interferes with meaning.	Sentence structure is ineffective, and few sentences are free of errors.	The main idea and/or point of view of the response is not identified.	Any organization that is present fails to present an effective sequence of ideas.	The candidate fails to include statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response.			

## WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE SAMPLE RESPONSES AND ANALYSES

### FIRST SAMPLE WEAK RESPONSE FOR WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

Recently a school administrator from Seattle has discovered that by providing a small snack for students, that problematic behaviors decreased. When children do not eat prior to coming to school this causes a great deal of problems. A solution to this is to provide within the beginning of the school day is a small snack to all students. This will help the children learn.

### ANALYSIS FOR FIRST WEAK RESPONSE TO WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

*This is an example of a weak response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Fidelity:** The response does not convey most of the main points and significant supporting details of the original passage. It does say that there are problems associated with children coming to school unfed, and that a solution would be to provide a snack "within the beginning of the school day" to all students, which would help them learn. However, the response does not mention the scope of the problem of food insecurity, its specific consequences, the shortcomings of existing school breakfast programs, or the need for legislative action. "When children do not eat" does not accurately convey the idea of hunger or food insecurity—it might simply mean that children have carelessly neglected to eat breakfast at home. At the same time, the response includes the detail of "a school administrator from Seattle," which is not significant.

**Conciseness:** The response is too short to permit the inclusion of the essential points.

**Expression:** The response is written in the candidate's own words, though some vocabulary from the original passage is used. However, the language is general ("problematic behaviors," "a great deal of problems"), and thus fails to convey significant supporting details.

**Grammar and Conventions:** Two words are misspelled ("administrator" and "beginning"). A comma is wrongly used in the first sentence. Sentence structure is flawed in two of the four sentences ("a school administrator . . . has discovered that by providing a small snack for students, that . . ." and "A solution to this is . . . is a small snack . . ."). "Within the beginning of the school day" and "a great deal of problems" are not idiomatic English. It would be better usage to say "At the beginning of the school day" and "a great many problems." The errors are distracting.

## SECOND SAMPLE WEAK RESPONSE FOR WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

Breakfast in bed is bad. But a child without having breakfast can face difficult realities in school. Statistics show a child who has had breakfast perform well and are able to express and sustain the class well. Push to make it mandatory in schools has brought alot of debate. The child could arrive late or face social stigma from his or hers peers. Children can be given a time slot in the morning for them allow to have breakfast. Children without proper food experience ear infections, headaches, stomachs, and other health problems.

### ANALYSIS FOR SECOND WEAK RESPONSE TO WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

*This is an example of a weak response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Fidelity:** The response does not accurately convey the main points and significant supporting details of the original passage. It does say that a child who has not had breakfast may face "difficult realities" in school and that children "without proper food" have health problems. However, the response does not identify those "difficult realities" (such as discipline or social problems, low test scores, or poor attendance) or clearly describe a school breakfast program or the recommendation that state legislators support such a program. Neither does the response clearly identify hunger or food-insecurity as the reason that children skip breakfast. At the same time, the response introduces opinion and information not found in the original passage ("Breakfast in bed is bad," "Push to make it mandatory has brought alot of debate," and "Statistics show a child who has had breakfast perform well"—a conclusion that may be implied by the passage but is not stated there).

**Conciseness:** The response is so short that in order to include the essential points and key supporting details, it would have to be very precisely and accurately written. Because it is not, it is short without being concise.

**Expression:** The response is mostly written in the candidate's own words, but expression is often unclear. The opening sentence appears unrelated to the rest of the response. It is unclear what is meant by "difficult realities," or "express and sustain the class." Expression is not coherent because ideas are not presented in a logical order: after the statement that children who eat breakfast perform well, the sentence "Push to make it mandatory" presumably refers to school breakfast programs, but these have not been mentioned. So the next statement, that "the child could arrive late or face social stigma" has no context. The final sentence, about "ear infections, headaches, stomachs, and other health problems" is copied, incorrectly, from the passage, and its content should have appeared earlier, as specific detail clarifying "difficult realities."

**Grammar and Conventions:** The response does not demonstrate good control of grammar and conventions. There are subject-verb disagreements ("a child . . . perform well and are able," "push . . . has brought"), usage errors ("his or hers peers," "for them allow to have breakfast"), awkward constructions ("a child without having breakfast"), and a misspelling ("alot").

## FIRST SAMPLE STRONG RESPONSE FOR WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

Some disciplinary problems in schools may have a simple solution: breakfast. Children who come to school hungry are more likely to demonstrate antisocial behavior. They also are more susceptible to illnesses, less likely to do well academically, and more frequently absent or suspended from school.

To address the problems posed by food-insecure households, some schools have instituted pre-school breakfast programs. However, many children may not arrive early enough to permit them to take part. Another stumbling block is the social stigma that may be attached to being fed at school. Thus it has been proposed that breakfast programs would be more effective if they included everyone. In just fifteen minutes per day, schools could ensure that each child is well prepared for classroom activities.

Some state legislators have shown reluctance to adopt such programs, but they need to view them as investments rather than handouts.

### ANALYSIS FOR FIRST STRONG RESPONSE TO WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

*This is an example of a strong response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Fidelity:** The response accurately and clearly conveys all the main ideas and significant details of the original passage: the specific problems that hungry children have at school, the shortcomings of current school breakfast programs and their solution, and the need for legislative support for that solution. All ideas in the response are found in the original passage. No new ideas were introduced in the response.

**Conciseness:** The response includes the essential information from the original passage while omitting less-important details, such as the peanut butter and crackers.

**Expression:** The response is written in the candidate's own words; though a few terms and phrases from the original passage are used ("food-insecure households," "social stigma"), these are used judiciously where paraphrase would be awkward or wordy. The response is coherently organized in three succinct paragraphs that cover the three main points of the passage.

**Grammar and Conventions:** There are no errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.

## SECOND SAMPLE STRONG RESPONSE FOR WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

Children who come from food-insecure homes often have emotional and behavioral difficulties at school, creating disciplinary issues in the classroom. In addition, these children experience more health problems, do less well on assessments, and have higher rates of absenteeism and suspensions. Before-school breakfast programs, where they are offered, may be inconvenient and carry a social stigma. An effective remedy would be a daily breakfast that is provided to all students, taking very little time away from the school day. Some state legislatures have balked at proposing yet another government-subsidized program supporting child nutrition. But these programs should be regarded as investments in our country's future.

## ANALYSIS FOR SECOND STRONG RESPONSE TO WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE

*This is an example of a strong response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Fidelity:** The response accurately and clearly conveys all the main ideas and significant details of the original passage: the specific problems that hungry children have at school, the shortcomings of current school breakfast programs and their solution, and the need for legislative support for that solution. No ideas not found in the original passage are introduced.

**Conciseness:** The response is very concise. Unnecessary details are omitted (such as the difficulty hungry children have making friends), while the central points are compactly conveyed ("these children experience more health problems, do less well on assessments, and have higher rates of absenteeism and suspensions"). The idea that "often, children do not arrive at school early enough to participate" is communicated in the single word "inconvenient."

**Expression:** The response is written in the candidate's own words and coherently organized in a single paragraph. Transitional words such as "in addition" and demonstrative pronouns ("these children," "these programs") allow the points to flow logically.

**Grammar and Conventions:** There are no errors in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.

## COMPOSITION EXERCISE SAMPLE RESPONSES AND ANALYSES

### FIRST SAMPLE WEAK RESPONSE FOR COMPOSITION EXERCISE

Ability grouping should not be allowed for the school systems. This will make the school system a segregation within itself and should not be allowed. First lets take an example of an individuale that does not speak english. In the school system the student has to perticipate in ESL classes and is usually not allowed in the classrooms where there is classes taking place that are in english. Therefore the student has to be take out of the classroom experience which will hinder thier learning experience. The teacher might have a bit of a difficity with the student but, it will be beneficial for the student to stay for those type of classroms where he will pick up english better and understand overtime. Because if this is done the enrich vocabularry.

When you look at this trough a specific classroom, lets say english, on the high school level. After the class write thier essay you have them peer-edit eachothers work. You could pair someone who excel's in writing to help someone who could use the help. If you keep the students who are at a lower level editing each others work; they may not catch the mistakes because to them it looks okay, that's how they write. Grouping should not be allowed in the school systems because: it hinders ones' ability to perticipate and by removing a child from the classrom, that child might not know what is going on and might think that they did something wrong and feel really guilty about the process of getting moved to a different classrom. It is not a good idea to do this process.

## ANALYSIS FOR FIRST WEAK RESPONSE TO COMPOSITION EXERCISE

*This is an example of a weak response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Appropriateness:** The response takes a position on the assigned issue ("Ability grouping should not be allowed for the school systems"), and partially addresses the assignment by arguing that ESL students should not be excluded from classes taught in English. However, the example of ESL students is a very narrow one, and arguably not a good example of ability grouping. The level of the language and style is inappropriate to the task of demonstrating writing competence through a formal essay to be read by a classroom instructor.

**Mechanical Conventions:** The response has many errors of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. A comma is wrongly placed after a conjunction ("difficaty with the student but, it will be . . ."), a semicolon is wrongly placed after a dependent clause ("If you keep the students . . . editing each others work; they"), and a colon is inserted where none is required ("Grouping should not be allowed in the school systems because: . . ."). Misspelled words include "classrom," "individuale," "thier," "vocabularry," and "peticipate." "English" is uncapitalized throughout the response.

**Usage:** Errors in usage are numerous and confusing, beginning with the opening sentence, "allowed for," rather than "allowed in." Similarly, "stay for" is written rather than "stay in." There is subject-verb disagreement ("there is classes," "the class write"). Statements such as "This will make the school system a segregation within itself" and "Because if this is done the enrich vocabularry" are unclear. "Over time" is run together into a single word, "overtime," which has a different and irrelevant meaning. Apostrophes are omitted where required ("lets," "each others") and inserted where not required ("excel's"). A student is referred to variously as "he," "they," and "one."

**Sentence Structure:** There are sentence fragments (the final sentence of paragraph one, and the first sentence of paragraph two). "By removing a child from the classrom, that child might not know" is a dangling participle.

**Focus and Unity:** The position taken is clear, but the points that follow are unclearly stated and so are hard to relate to the thesis. In the first paragraph, the ESL student is not being allowed to take classes that are conducted in English: "Therefore the student has to be take out of the classroom experience." But presumably the student would be in a classroom somewhere else. Confusingly, in the next sentence the student seems to be back in the original classroom. None of these ideas truly support the assertion that "this will make the school system a segregation within itself."

**Organization:** Organization is largely unclear. The opening paragraph moves directly from position statement to a supporting argument. It is hard to follow the logic that moves from "therefore the student has to be take out of the classroom" to "the teacher might have a bit of a difficaty . . . but, it will be beneficial for the student to stay for those type of classroms. . . ." The intended meaning must be that if the student were to be allowed to remain in the English-speaking classroom, he/she would benefit, despite the difficulty posed to the teacher. However, this understanding requires the reader's inference. In the second paragraph the response suddenly addresses "you," who seems to be an English teacher practicing peer editing in a mixed-ability classroom. The argument being made, that lower-level students are not able to help one another through peer editing, has no clear relationship to the previous points about ESL students. The final point, that a child being removed from one classroom to another might not understand what is happening and might feel guilty, is also unrelated to previous points.

**Development:** Very few statements contribute effectively to the development of the response. The argument about ESL students is not supported by any explanation of what is wrong with the instruction offered to them in specialized classes. Arguments about ability grouping are supported very sketchily: it "will hinder thier learning experience," and "it will be beneficial for the student to stay." The one example given of the ability-grouped classroom is about peer editing, which is unlikely to be a teaching strategy in a low-level English class. The argument that students might feel guilty is not supported by any explanations or examples.

## SECOND SAMPLE WEAK RESPONSE FOR COMPOSITION EXERCISE

Everyone always says students should learn to their fullest potential. How can student be pushed when they aren't challenged by school or their needs for learning aren't being met. Its important for students be identified of their learning type and be placed into the correct group in school so they can benefit from their educational experience.

People may not think it is fair or right for people to judge individuals learning styles. They have got this idea wrong. Everyone isn't the same type of learner and has certain strengths and weakness they should care about. They also shouldn't be embarrassed or even care what other think. They should just focus on their education and not worried on being grouped. They have no right to infer judgements on other that may not have a same style.

Even in schools today kids are grouped for their learning styles. People aren't being mean or libelling them in a bad way, the school is just trying to help out the student to feeling they are confident about their learning. Schools can have many ways of determining students needs of the classroom. They can be provided with tests which can involve hands on, visual and oral; a little on everything so teachers can determine on testing the students needs for any extra help they had need to place them in a group.

Finally, I think it would be a good idea and very beneficial not only to that one student but to the entire class. Everyone can gain from this system. In our world today as things become more adavanced; kids learning to their fullest potential would benefit of our society and themselves.

## ANALYSIS FOR SECOND WEAK RESPONSE TO COMPOSITION EXERCISE

*This is an example of a weak response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Appropriateness:** The response takes a position on the assigned issue ("Its important for students be identified of their learning type and be placed into the correct group in school"), although it is not clear that "learning type" is the same thing as "ability." The response partially addresses the assignment by arguing that placing students in groups according to their learning styles will be beneficial to them. However, very little is said about this except that this placement should not be embarrassing. The level of development of the response is not appropriate for demonstrating writing competence through a formal essay to be read by a classroom instructor.

**Mechanical Conventions:** The response has few spelling errors ("adadvanced") and no errors of capitalization. It has several punctuation errors: a period used to end a question ("How can student be pushed when . . . their needs . . . aren't being met," and two semicolons that should be commas, as the semicolons do not separate two independent clauses.

**Usage:** Errors in usage create confusion, especially in paragraph two, where "they" often lacks a clear antecedent, seeming to move from people who do not think it is fair to judge, to other people who do judge, to students being judged, back to the people who are judging. Other usage errors are distracting ("Its important for students be identified of their learning type"). "Infer" is used to mean "pass" or "make." "Libelling" is used to mean "labeling." There are errors of subject-verb agreement ("how can student be," "care what other think").

**Sentence Structure:** There are problems with sentence structure: a comma splice ("People aren't being mean . . . , the school is just trying . . ."), an absent verb ("They should just focus on their education and not worried on being grouped.")

**Focus and Unity:** A position in favor of grouping students according to learning styles is maintained throughout, but the argument lacks clarity in large measure because of the vague and unclear use of pronouns. "They" often lacks a clear antecedent, beyond the example already given. For instance, in paragraph three, "Schools can have many ways of determining students needs of the classroom. They can be provided with tests. . . ." It is unclear whether "they" refers to schools or to students.

**Organization:** Organization is marked by appropriate paragraphing. However, the argument is not clearly made. The opening paragraph refers to developing students' full potential and the benefits of grouping. But the next paragraph is about how no stigma should be attached to grouping, and the third paragraph asserts that students are already grouped and that tests can determine group placement. The final paragraph asserts that grouping would benefit the "entire class," but moves quickly to a different point, unclearly stated, about the need for grouping in an advanced society.

**Development:** The response is not effectively developed. Assertions are made but not supported. The term "learning styles" is not defined, and no examples of different styles are offered. No support is given for the claim that grouping students according to learning styles is educationally beneficial. It is not clear why there would be any stigma attached to different learning styles, or who attaches that stigma to them. The testing that would sort students by learning style ("hands on, visual and oral") is vague and unclear.

## FIRST SAMPLE STRONG RESPONSE FOR COMPOSITION EXERCISE

Grouping students by ability seems like a great idea on the surface. It would simplify a teacher's job by creating a classroom of students who are capable of learning at approximately the same level. This could be to the benefit of students because they will not have to wait through instruction that is inappropriate for them. However, tracking would also introduce many problems. Schools would have to devote resources to the administration of tracking itself. Tracking would be likely to benefit some students at the expense of others. The diversity and understanding that we should promote for our society would be undermined, and students assigned to lower groups might internalize a negative view of themselves. There are benefits to dividing classes by ability, but overall the problems would overshadow them.

Ability tracking does not mean placing students in particular tracks and leaving them there forever. As students grow and learn and encounter new subjects, their abilities may rise and fall. Teachers would have to sort students into different tracks on a regular basis. This would take a lot of time and is difficult to do fairly. Because a placement might not be fair, it would need to be reviewed at least every year so that any incorrect placements could be changed. Making these assessments would create a whole new category of work for teachers and administrators, while in today's classrooms teachers are already pressed for time with standardized tests and over-stuffed curriculums.

The students most likely to benefit from ability tracking would be the ones who need help the least, the highly gifted and motivated. Although tracking might help to provide appropriate challenges for gifted students, this might come at the cost of other students. Teachers, taxpayers, and parents are likely to be more willing to put limited resources into a group that will clearly benefit from them: the gifted group. But this would not be fair and would widen the achievement gap even further. Education for all is a fundamental right, and public funds should be allocated equally among students. Homogeneous grouping is additionally detrimental to students' social development, even the gifted ones, because in the real world individuals of varying ability are forced to work and live together. To place the top students in a hothouse of other top students in no way prepares them for the real world. Meanwhile the other students are not inspired and challenged by their presence.

Ability tracking would also require more resources because if classes are taking place at different skill levels they will probably require different materials, perhaps entirely different textbooks or equipment. Schools today struggle to maintain adequate and up-to-date materials as it is. They do not need additional financial burdens.

An even more pressing issue than the resources for ability grouping is the psychological component. Teachers would need to decide whether to place students in higher or lower tracks, but a student's ability is not a black and white matter. Students may excel in some subjects, not in others, or even perform at different levels within a subject. The diversity of qualities

*(continued)*

on which to assess students would make the semantics of grouping a nightmare. Teachers and parents could potentially be at odds over a placement, which could create headaches for the school. The reaction of the child is also important to consider. Instead of being seen as a valued member of the school community, each student would now be judged by his supposed "ability." This assessment might be unfair and hurtful. Students labelled as slow or weak may lose motivation or hope, and teachers may unfairly stereotype them.

Ultimately, though ability tracking might seem to offer benefits, it is too much of a minefield. The potential for unfairness, high costs and stigma are too great. Ability grouping does not appropriately promote the diversity and equality we value as Americans. This is not to say that all students perform at the same level, but that their differences need to be respected within a shared classroom, where all have an equal opportunity to excel.

## ANALYSIS FOR FIRST STRONG RESPONSE TO COMPOSITION EXERCISE

*This is an example of a strong response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Appropriateness:** The response addresses the topic fully and uses language and style that are appropriate to the occasion and audience—writing a formal essay to be read by an audience of classroom instructors.

**Mechanical Conventions:** The response demonstrates a mastery of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, including the colon, the plural possessive apostrophe, and the correct enclosure of punctuation within quotation marks.

**Usage:** The response employs a precise and effective vocabulary, including terms such as "internalize," "overshadow," "over-stuffed curriculums," "homogeneous grouping," "semantics," "stereotype," "stigma," and "minefield." Sentences are grammatical, and pronouns have clear antecedents.

**Sentence Structure:** Sentence structure is error free and effectively varied in form and rhythm. For instance, in the fourth paragraph, a very long sentence is followed by a shorter one, and then a still shorter one whose point then carries more power.

**Focus and Unity:** The response remains clearly focused on its thesis throughout: ability grouping would create more problems than it would solve. Arguments are forecast in the opening paragraph that are then developed in the body paragraphs and reinforced by a matching conclusion.

**Organization:** The response is very well organized. The opening paragraph acknowledges the potential benefits of ability tracking but argues that these benefits would be outweighed by specific problems. The second paragraph focuses on the administrative burdens of ability tracking; the third paragraph cites the inequities that would harm lower-level students and the limitations that would harm high-level ones. The fourth paragraph points out the resource costs that would be involved; the fifth deals with the difficulties of placement. The final paragraph presents a conclusion that both summarizes the arguments and goes beyond them to say that ability grouping is at odds with American ideals.

**Development:** Each of the arguments the response makes is well supported. The workload that ability tracking would place on teachers and administrators is described; the problems of the homogeneous classrooms (overfunding of higher-level classes at the expense of lower-level ones, the loss of the realistic experience of diversity, the loss of inspiration by other students) are anticipated; the psychological problems for teachers trying to place students, and for parents and students reacting to placements, as well as the potential for harmful error, are powerfully cited.

## SECOND SAMPLE STRONG RESPONSE FOR COMPOSITION EXERCISE

The education of children is a challenging endeavor. Each child has his or her own particular set of needs, strengths, and interests. In the classroom setting, instructing twenty-five students or more all at once in a large group is almost certain to leave many of those needs unaddressed. Thus, ability grouping is an appropriate practice to respect and support each child and his or her potential.

Having a class made up of such a large number of students of varying abilities presents a very difficult situation for the teacher. Teaching in a way that will challenge the gifted student will leave many children behind. However, teaching to the bottom skill level leaves those who have already mastered the material frustrated and bored. Likewise, maintaining a middle course alienates those at both the upper and lower ends of the spectrum. Although those who oppose ability grouping envision a classroom in which the quicker students serve as resources for the slower ones, in practice this does not really work well. The stronger students have a right to the role of student, and not to be used as teacher aides; and any instruction by them may not be well received by their peers. Further, although they may understand the material well, that does not mean they are equipped to teach it. Students who need extra help deserve the professionalism, experience and attention of the classroom teacher.

The only logical solution is to institute some form of ability group. In this scenario, those with special needs will have their needs met. The students who struggle with classwork can work at their own level without embarrassment and without having to feel they are making others impatiently wait. Those for whom the classwork is too easy will be able to forge ahead without having to feel odd or be resented. Both types of student will be relieved of the burden of not fitting in.

It is important to understand that ability grouping not only helps students to focus academically, but also helps them socially. Students who are having difficulty realize they are not alone in their struggles. Gifted students, likewise, realize they are not alone in their interests, and can benefit immensely from interactions with other students like themselves.

Opponents of ability grouping will argue that it will result in labelling and be detrimental to the student. Other opponents will argue that having a mixed class allows students to benefit from their interactions with each other. However, these concerns can be addressed. Ability grouping does not have to trumpet itself with labels at all: it can be done subtly, without announcement. Children may remain unaware of it. Of course, it is not appropriate for all activities, and for those activities the entire class can be mingled together freely. In addition, these groups need not be static.

Nobody is good at everything. It is possible to define ability groupings in a very fluid way, such that the groups are short-lived and reflect interest level and skill level on a particular topic rather than more globally. Thus a child might be in a high level grouping in a unit about the

*(continued)*

Civil War, but a low level grouping in math. This arrangement avoids the entire problem of labelling, and also avoids the pitfalls of a one-time entrance assessment in which many students may be placed in the incorrect grouping. Also, interests and skill sets change over time, and a fluid ability group could accommodate that.

Thus, while not a panacea, ability grouping is an important and useful tool. It can allow students all to have the experience of feeling normal, unjudged, and moving forward in a positive, gratifying way. It can allow the teacher to modify lessons to be optimally useful and interesting to the students involved. Rather than categorize students in a demeaning way, it allows each student a more personalized kind of instruction. When implemented well, and used in conjunction with periods when the class as a whole interacts, ability groups help meet everyone's educational needs.

## ANALYSIS FOR SECOND STRONG RESPONSE TO COMPOSITION EXERCISE

*This is an example of a strong response because it is characterized by the following:*

**Appropriateness:** The response addresses the topic fully and uses language and style that are appropriate to the occasion and audience—writing a formal essay to be read by an audience of classroom instructors.

**Mechanical Conventions:** The response demonstrates a mastery of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, including the semicolon, colon, and the hyphen to create compound adjectives.

**Usage:** The response employs a precise and effective vocabulary, including terms such as "alienate," "spectrum," "trumpet itself," "panacea," "demeaning," and "conjunction."

**Sentence Structure:** Sentence structure is error free, varied, and complex. Simple declarative statements are alternated with longer, more complex sentences. Parallel statements build arguments (as in paragraph three: "The students who struggle . . . Those for whom the classwork is too easy . . . Both types of student . . .").

**Focus and Unity:** The response is clearly focused throughout on its opening position: "ability grouping is an appropriate practice to respect and support each child and his or her potential." Body paragraphs establish that in a heterogeneous classroom, no students are well served, that ability grouping serves students' academic and social needs, and that the concerns of critics can be acknowledged and addressed. The conclusion sums up these arguments, supporting ability grouping modified by periods of whole-class participation, and acknowledging the need to implement grouping skillfully.

**Organization:** The response is very well organized. The opening paragraph clearly presents ability grouping as the best means of supporting all children's educational needs. The second paragraph describes the frustrations of each kind of student in classrooms where there is no tracking, and points out the flaws in the practice of having stronger students act as tutors of weaker ones. The third and fourth paragraphs describe the academic and social benefits to children of being able to work at their own pace and not feel odd. The fifth and sixth paragraphs acknowledge the concerns of critics and offer solutions for them, along with an elucidation of the flexibility of ability tracking. The final paragraph offers a brief summary and conclusion.

**Development:** Each of the arguments the response makes is well supported, chiefly through description, logical argument, and hypothetical examples. Because the interests of both the higher- and lower-level students are equally addressed, the arguments feel balanced and reasonable, a quality that contributes to persuasiveness.

## **PRACTICE TEST SCORE CALCULATION**

The practice test score calculation information will be available in winter 2010, following setting of qualifying scores.