



Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure®

COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY SKILLS WRITING SUBTEST

SUPPLEMENTAL SAMPLE OPEN-RESPONSE ITEMS WITH SAMPLE RESPONSES AND ANALYSES

NOTE: These sample open-response items are provided as a supplement to the Test Information Guide and Practice Test provided for this test at www.mtel.nesinc.com.

SAMPLE 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.

SAMPLE RESPONSES AND ANALYSES

Sample Score Point 4 Response

Students who are hungry and live in "food-insecure" situations are more likely to face health and behavioral problems that negatively affect their ability to learn. Typical issues range from headaches and ear infections to anti-social behavior and anxiety, resulting in more absences and less learning in the classroom.

Current school breakfast programs represent a good step towards addressing the need, but they often end each day before many children get to school, and children often feel embarrassed about participating. A program where all students receive breakfast at the start of the school day would eradicate these issues and should be supported. For legislatures to back it, however, the general public must begin thinking of free school breakfast for everyone as essential to future success, not as government charity.

Analysis of Sample Score Point 4 Response

Fidelity: The response clearly and accurately conveys all the main points and significant details of the 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). It does not introduce extraneous commentary or information, and the relationships among ideas are preserved.

Conciseness: The response is concise, but provides enough statements of appropriate specificity to convey the main ideas and significant details of the original passage. Unnecessary details are omitted (e.g., the Seattle principal and her peanut butter and crackers solution) while the central points of the passage are conveyed directly and concisely. Enough specifics are provided to connect the ideas and show understanding of the main points.

Expression: The response is written clearly and coherently in the candidate's own words. Limited wording from the original passage is used, but only to preserve conciseness, i.e., when substitutions would result in longer, more awkward phrasing. "[H]eadaches," "ear infections," "anti-social behavior," and "anxiety" appear in the original, but the candidate has used original sentence structure, and none of these words has easy, one-word synonyms.

Grammar and Conventions: The response shows excellent control of grammar and conventions throughout. Sentence structure, word choice, and usage are precise and effective. Mechanics conform to standard English conventions.

Sample Score Point 3 Response

An elementary school principal in Seattle found that peanut butter and crackers helped children behave better--they were just hungry. Children who don't have enough food do not do well in school. There are a lot more cases of being suspended, absences, and illnesses in hungry children than in children who aren't hungry. A plan needs to be put in place to make sure children get proper nutrition before they start school. School breakfast should be provided to every child during the first fifteen minutes of the school day. This will help children who face a social stigma for eating breakfast at school, in programs provided by the schools now. Children will learn and behave better if this plan is put in place.

Analysis of Sample Score Point 3 Response

Fidelity: The response presents most of the writer's main points. The ideas that hungry children face health and behavior problems which affect their learning, that current school breakfast plans are not adequate, and that a plan is needed to feed all children breakfast at the beginning of the school day are all generally understood. The summary does not include the idea that for the legislature to act, a change in public attitude is necessary. Most statements are generally accurate but not as precise as in the "4" response. For example, "Children who don't have enough food do not do well in school" is generally faithful to the passage, but it is broad and does not capture the idea that the children affected are from "food-insecure" homes. It follows the phrase "they were just hungry," which again might apply to any child who might have missed breakfast that day.

Conciseness: The response leaves out the idea that for the legislature to act, a change in public attitude is necessary, but it is long enough to generally address the main point and most significant details. It is less concise than it could be because it opens with an unnecessary detail about the crackers and peanut butter that one Seattle principal uses to address discipline problems. Because the sentences are relatively simple, there is little packing of ideas and details into one sentence. For example, sentences two and three might easily be combined for greater conciseness and effect.

Expression: The candidate generally uses his own words. The phrase "face a social stigma for eating breakfast at school" is from the passage, but it is embedded within the candidate's own sentence structure. Otherwise, phrasing used from the original passage is limited to "school breakfast" and "elementary school principal," wording that does not benefit from being restated; if an attempt to paraphrase were made, the rewording would be longer than the original and thus would negatively affect conciseness.

Grammar and Conventions: The response demonstrates general control of grammar and conventions while using adequate, simple sentence structure. Minor errors in mechanics include misspelling "a lot," a lack of parallelism in the list "cases of being suspended, absences, and illnesses," and an unnecessary comma after "school" in the sentence that begins, "This will help children."

Sample Score Point 2 Response

In Seattle Washington they have discovered a new way to keep the minds of children on through out their classroom lectures. It helping them to be better behaved to stay focussed on their teachers. This will make students do better in school as a result of this. School principal gave students a secret snack of peanut butter and crackers which went a long way towards making the hungry students behavoir better. It was because she began to ask her students (if they were in trouble and send to principal before lunch) if they had ate breakfast. An over whelming number of students had ate nothing that day.

There fore it was unfair to expect children to behave well and engage in learning when they are hungry. Not eating breakfasts or a kid being in a food insecure household makes it lead to numerous problem physically, emotionally, and behavioral for children. These children get sicker more than the other kids in the school and they punch each other more and are anti-social. So, what was the solution for this Seattle schools? They all began to start their classes each and every single morning by giveing that peanut butter and crackers snack to every student in the class. This gave each student a fair chance to start their day right and not by being hungry.

Analysis of Sample Score Point 2 Response

Fidelity: The response conveys some of the passage's main ideas, namely that hunger has negative effects on students and that providing children food at the beginning of the school day is important. The candidate does not include the points that current school breakfast plans are not adequate or that for the legislature to act, a change in public attitude is necessary. In addition, inaccuracies and additions not found in the original passage negatively affect fidelity. For example, the candidate wrongly extends the Seattle anecdote to the entire article, refers to "classroom lectures" in an elementary school, and states that hungry students "punch each other more."

Conciseness: This response is not concise. Instead of being omitted, minor supporting details such as the "secret snack" are overemphasized. Spending so much time on the opening paragraph of the original passage while leaving out main ideas results in a summary that is too long in length but at the same time missing essential information.

Expression: The response uses language from the original passage, including short phrases (e.g., "long way towards") and almost entire sentences, such as "There fore it was *unfair to expect children to behave well and engage in learning when they are hungry.*" When using original language, the response is at times unclear: "In Seattle Washington they have discovered a new way to keep the minds of children on through out their classroom lectures." It is not clear, especially since this is the first sentence of the summary, what "keep the minds of children on" means.

Grammar and Conventions: The response demonstrates limited control of grammar and conventions. The number and variety of errors are distracting. They include lack of pronoun-antecedent agreement (e.g., "This gave each student a fair chance to start their day"), usage errors (e.g., "through out" and "over whelming"), misspellings (e.g., "behavoir," "becase," "giveing"), incorrect plurals (e.g., "this Seattle schools"), and awkward constructions (e.g., "This will make student do better in school as a result of this").

Sample Score Point 1 Response

The essay talked all about how a principle in a Seattle school announce that she knew the secret to disciplin and that secret is penut butter and crackars. She found that there would be mis-behavior problem and no breakfast problem. This problem is a very big problem for many peple like parents students teachers. Breakfast is the most imoprant meal of the whole day and every one have breakfast because no breakfast means that student if student or no is hungry if a student is not eating the right nutrient then they are not able to be in class; and if a student is not eating the right breakfast they are not able to preform by behaveing in class. Especially in morning. Her scool came up with a program where okay students to eat breakfast at school.

Analysis of Sample Score Point 1 Response

Fidelity: The response fails to convey 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). While "breakfast" and "mis-behavior" appear in the response, the relationship between them is not clear or accurate. The candidate's assertion that the Seattle school instituted a breakfast program is not supported by the passage. In addition, the candidate introduces opinion (e.g., "Breakfast is the most imoprant meal of the whole day") and suggests that the "right breakfast" is important, a point the original passage does not make.

Conciseness: The response is not concise. It excludes almost all of the content of the original passage by misrepresenting its meaning. Everything from the suggestion that the Seattle principal discovered "the secret to disciplin" to the assertion that the Seattle school "came up with a program where okay students to eat breaksfast at school" replaces the original content with inaccurate interpretations.

Expression: While the response is written in the candidate's own words, it is mostly confused and incoherent. When read literally, the sentence "She found that there is mis-behavior problem and no breakfast problem" would be opposite in meaning to what the original passage conveys. The next sentence, "This problem is a very big problem for many peple like parents students teachers," is confusing because the reader does not know which problem is referred to or in what way it is a problem for any of the people listed.

Grammar and Conventions: The response fails to show control of grammar and conventions. Many of the errors in this response impede communication. For example, what does it mean that "no breakfast means that student if student or no is hungry if a student is not eating the right nutrient then they are not able to be in class" or "if a student is not eating the right breakfast they are not able to preform by behaveing in class"? The multiple grammatical errors in these sentences make them difficult to understand. In other parts of the response, the many mechanical and grammatical errors include lack of subject-verb agreement (e.g., "a principle in a Seattle school announce"), misspellings (e.g., "disciplin," "penut," and "peple"), wrong usage (e.g., "principle" instead of "principal"), and fragments (e.g., "Especially in morning").

SAMPLE 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.

SAMPLE RESPONSES AND ANALYSES

Sample Score Point 4 Response

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 spend administrative time overseeing the tracking. 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 develop a negative view of themselves. There are benefits to dividing classes by ability, but overall the problems would outweigh 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 packed 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

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Sample Score Point 4 Response (*continued*)

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 just with 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 costs, especially during our current economic crisis, with teachers facing layoffs as school systems struggle to find the financial means just to keep schools open.

An even more important issue for ability grouping is the psychological affects on students. 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. 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 "ability." This assessment might be unfair and hurtful. Students labelled as slow or weak may lose motivation or hope, and teachers and their peers 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 of Sample Score Point 4 Response

Appropriateness: The response addresses the topic fully and uses language and style that are appropriate to the occasion and audience—writing a formal essay for a professional credential, 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. There are a couple of minor comma errors (not placing a comma after the introductory element "Meanwhile" in the third paragraph and failing to close off the nonrestrictive element "even the gifted ones" with a second comma, also in the third paragraph) that do not detract from the total effect of mastery.

Usage: The response employs a precise and effective vocabulary, including terms such as "Homogeneous grouping," "stereotype," "minefield," and "stigma." Pronouns have clear antecedents, with one exception: in the sentence, "Students labelled as slow or weak may lose motivation or hope, and teachers and their peers may unfairly stereotype them," it is unclear whether "their" refers to "teachers" or "students."

Sentence Structure: Sentence structure is effectively varied in form and rhythm. For instance, in the fourth paragraph, a very long sentence is followed by a shorter one, adding more power to the main point emphasized in the concluding sentence.

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 ability that tracking would place on teachers and administrators is described; the problems of the homogeneous classrooms (over-funding 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.

Sample Score Point 3 Response

Some say that schools don't provide appropriate challenges for gifted students unless ability grouping is available. Others believe that schools cannot determine individual potential and are placed in wrong categories of learning abilities if ability grouping exists. Many debates are continually going on discussing if the appropriate educational practice should be to have ability grouping or not have it. Ability grouping is not an appropriate educational practice because many students are placed in the wrong levels of learning capabilities, being in a classroom of mixed learning abilities allows students to better strive towards their goals, and putting them in groups puts a negative label to the student's name.

Today, schools cannot afford to pay as many teachers as they used to, they certainly cannot afford to determine individual potential. How often would they do this anyway. The schools test to see what level the student should be placed in but what if they are having an off day? The children get placed in the wrong group. Here the consequences could be life long. Testing is not right to decide such major issue, because a true test of potential could never exist-no one can see into the future to tell if they are going to do well, or might have done better in a different class. It is up to the individual person.

If students are in mixed ability levels, they will work harder to meet higher goals. They need some guidance and if people are doing well around them they will work harder to get those high grades. The students that are better learners can help the students with lower ability levels. Students can learn from other students. In the other scenario you have students who never have a chance to see what they might be able to be capable of, because everyone around them is giving up. These students are being marginalized unfairly.

Once someone places a label on you it sticks. Just like a bad nickname, a negative label of "slow learner" sticks with them forever. This can cause a lot of damage to their self esteem. We are not supposed to be damaging students self esteem, we are supposed to be building them up.

In conclusion, it is not fair to the students to be placed in ability grouping. Schools cannot determine appropriate learning levels and may not be able to achieve at high levels if they weren't placed in such a low level of learning. The students in a mixed learning environment will be able to learn from each other and a negative label is stuck with that child forever. The ability grouped learning is not an appropriate educational practice.

Analysis of Sample Score Point 3 Response

Appropriateness: The response takes the form of a persuasive composition that addresses the topic adequately and generally uses appropriate language and style. The argument is made that ability grouping is unfair to students and undermines motivation. Some language is inappropriately informal, e.g., "having an off day" and "Once someone places a label on you it sticks" (inappropriate use of the second person).

Mechanical Conventions: The response contains some mechanical errors. There is a comma splice (first sentence of paragraph two, and again in the final sentence of paragraph four) and omitted possessive apostrophes ("students name," "students self esteem"). The question "How often would they do this anyway" is punctuated with a period instead of a question mark. Misspellings include "capabilities," "scenerio," and "abilty."

Usage: The response shows some errors in usage and word choice. "Marginized" is an incorrect attempt to use "marginalized." Pronouns are not always used correctly. In the sentence, "The schools test to see what level the student should be placed in but what if they are having an off day?" the pronoun "they" is probably meant to refer to "student," but because it is plural, grammatically it refers to "schools," which alters the meaning. Another pronoun agreement problem occurs soon after: "no one can see into the future to tell if they are going to do well." Paragraph four moves from second person ("you") to third ("them"). In the final sentence, the phrase "the ability grouped learning" is awkward.

Sentence Structure: Sentence structure is adequate, with some minor errors. For example, in the second sentence, "Others believe that schools cannot determine individual potential and are placed in wrong categories of learning abilities if ability grouping exists," the students who "are placed" are omitted, so that it seems the schools themselves are being placed. Similarly, in the final paragraph, "Schools cannot determine appropriate learning levels and may be able to achieve at high levels if they weren't placed in such a low level of learning," the students again are omitted. In the opening paragraph, the sentence forecasting the three arguments is not parallel: "students are placed ..." is a different structure than "being in a classroom ... allows" and "putting them in groups ... puts."

Focus and Unity: The response remains generally focused on its thesis. The second paragraph introduces the idea that schools cannot afford to perform diagnostic testing, an argument that is not related to the other arguments made and is not developed. The question "How often would they do this anyway" is also left hanging. The third argument (in paragraph four) does not mention "ability grouping" to aid the reader in connecting its points to the thesis.

Organization: The organization of the response is generally clear. The first paragraph identifies three reasons for the position, which are taken up for discussion in the three body paragraphs. There is a conclusion. Between and within paragraphs, there are only a few connecting words or phrases that help the logical sequence of ideas.

Development: There is sufficient support to adequately develop the response. Some support is repetitive. In paragraph three, for example, the point "they will work harder" is made twice in a row. In paragraph four, similarly, the point is made twice that a "label ... sticks." The paragraph has very little additional development.

Sample Score Point 2 Response

I do not agree with this idea, grouping is not appropriate during educational practice. When children are put in a group they are automatically labelled as such. If a child is not the best and they are labelled it can be crucial towards their self-esteem. Children should be able to learn and grow from each other. Not every child performs at the same rate but they should not be labelled for everyone to notice and judge them differently. If a child is that far advanced or behind then the rest of the children then the administration and parents should talk about having the child's grade highered or lowered depending on the situation. By placing children into groups its like "you can't be worked with".

The cost of hiring more educators to educate these students are in fact more costly. They can not afford this in this time of budgets. People are losing their jobs with unemployment running out can't keep up the mortgage payments. The fact is that when classrooms thru-out America would only benefit by having students who are disabled within their classes. You say no child left behind, but this would leave them behind. They have just as much to contribute as anyone. In this country everyone is equal and not better than another person - this is America. In the groups every one knows who they are and this can be hurtful.

There are some students who have special needs, they need to be in their own groups sometimes. Reading disability or dyslexia. They have their own teachers who come in. This is a no-brainer b/c it is different than grouping. If these kids did not go to their special class than that teacher would have nothing to do, it would be a job with no work, that wouldn't be fair to anyone. It is already built-in. They are not being held back they are being helped.

Analysis of Sample Score Point 2 Response

Appropriateness: The response partially addresses the topic, taking the position that "grouping" is not appropriate ("ability grouping" must be inferred by the reader). There is some inappropriate language and style: the use of the phrase "its like" to introduce a quoted statement; the abbreviation "thru," the informal "no-brainer" and "b/c." At one point the response switches to second person, an inappropriate voice for a formal essay: "You say no child left behind."

Mechanical Conventions: The response shows numerous mechanical errors. The opening sentence uses a comma splice. Apostrophes are omitted: "child's grade," "its," "cant," "wouldnt." A hyphen is wrongly inserted: "it is already built-in." "America" is not capitalized. Misspellings include "durring," "crutial," "preforms," "sittuation," "morgage," and "dylexia."

Usage: Imprecision in usage and word choice is distracting. In the opening sentence, "grouping is not appropriate durring educational practice" is confusing: during what educational practice? Many unclear phrases (e.g., "crutial towards they're self-esteem," "grow from each other,") force the reader to puzzle out meaning. "Then" is confused with "than"; "highered" is not a word. There are agreement problems of pronoun with antecedent ("Not every child ... they") and of subject with verb ("The cost ... are"). The word "disabled" is either wrongly used or the writer has misunderstood the topic. "They're" is consistently used to mean "their." The word "loosing" is used for "losing."

Sentence Structure: Sentence structure is poor. A dangling participle has no subject: "By placing children into groups its like 'you cant be worked with'." In the sentence, "People are loosing they're jobs with unemployment running out cant keep up the morgage payments," the second predicate has no subject. "Reading disability or dylexia" is a fragment. "They are not being held back they are being helped" is a run-on. The cumulative effect of the sentence structure errors distracts and confuses the reader.

Focus and Unity: The focus and unity of the discussion are not sustained. The first two paragraphs are loosely concerned with arguments against grouping as hurtful labeling, but there is a detour into the issues of cost, unemployment, the mainstreaming of the disabled and "this is america." The third paragraph supports grouping of students with special needs, who are apparently not hurtfully labeled—a contradictory position.

Organization: The organization of the response is largely unclear. The opening paragraph says "grouping" is not appropriate, then says children should not be labeled (as what?), and then speaks of parents and administration "having the child's grade highered or lowered"—the first clue the reader has that the setting is school. The second paragraph touches on the cost of hiring educators, "this time of budgets," putting disabled students in the classroom, "no child left behind," and equality in "america." The third paragraph supports separate classes and teachers for students with special needs. Although each paragraph partially has a loose topic of its own, the relationship of one paragraph with the next is unclear.

Development: Very few statements contribute to the effective development of the response. Support is vague ("Children should be able to learn and grow from each other"), illogical ("This is a no-brainer b/c it is different than grouping"), or irrelevant ("If these kids did not go to they're special class than that teacher would have nothing to do, it would be a job with no work").

Sample Score Point 1 Response

People are always going to be in groups in school, that's the way people are. If teachers put them there or they do. It's the same with "gifted" and "special", the names they give "ability". We all want belong somewhere. There are multiple different kinds of intelligences - those are groups. Religions, ethnicities - also groups. Who's to say whether it's good or bad. I might not agree with you about something but in my personal view that's a box I don't want to be in, people can change. When looking at academic the thing most of the time is Motivation, whether students are putting in the time or decided "this course is a waste, I want to go hang out. Highschool has a lot of other things they could be involved with, such as: sports, music or maybe you have a job after school. If anything ability is secondary or third in how important the affect on grades and that's true in any group even "honors".

At some point you have to not care a negative label is just that, it's not real, but it is in someone's mine. Like: jocks and geeks, or the In Crowd as opposed to anybody else. It's kind of stupid but it's human nature.

Analysis of Sample Score Point 1 Response

Appropriateness: The response attempts to address the assignment, but the issue of whether or not ability grouping is appropriate educational practice does not clearly emerge. Language and style are inappropriately informal (e.g., "thats a box I dont want to be in" and "Its kind of stupid").

Mechanical Conventions: Serious and numerous errors in mechanical conventions make the response difficult to read. Errors include comma splices (e.g., "At some point you have to not care a negative lable is just that, its not real, but it is in someones mine"), missing apostrophes in contractions (e.g., "thats"), words wrongly capitalized (e.g., "Motivation" and "In Crowd"), words wrongly compounded (e.g., "Highschool" and "alot") or split (e.g., "any body"), and misspellings (e.g., "multipal," "intellegences," "ethicities," "personel," "wether," "wast," "invovled," "ability," and "lable"). There is a very high frequency of errors in a very short response.

Usage: Usage errors are pervasive and include "whose," "its," "affect," "mine," and "humane." The imprecision of "I might not agree with you about something but in my personel view thats a box I dont want to be in" makes meaning difficult to comprehend—what is "that" and how is it like a "box"?

Sentence Structure: Sentence structure is ineffective and few sentences are free of errors. For example, the opening sentence is a run-on. The second sentence is a fragment. "We all want belong somewhere" requires the use of the infinitive. The phrases "wether students are putting in the time or decided" and "sports, music or maybe you have a job" lack parallel structure.

Focus and Unity: No main idea or point of view is identified with respect to ability grouping in the classroom or even with respect to "groups," which the response seems to take as its subject. Ideas mentioned include that groups are inevitable, there are many different kinds, people may disagree, motivation affects grades, and negative labels have to be ignored. There is no unity among these various ideas.

Organization: The response fails to present a logical sequence of ideas. The response does not distinguish among groups people are assigned to (" 'gifted' and 'special' "), groups people fall into ("Religions, ethicities"), or groups people actively join ("sports, music"). Passing references are made to categorization, academic motivation, and social types ("jocks and geeks"), but these ideas are not related to one another. The response is written in two paragraphs, one long and disorganized, and one that seems to be presenting a conclusion, but that actually introduces a new point.

Development: The response lacks statements that contribute effectively to its development. As it lacks focus, there is no thesis to support. Statements such as "We all want belong somewhere" are not followed by support. The one point that is somewhat developed, about motivation being more important than ability in determining grades, is irrelevant to the assigned topic.