

Part I

THE WRITING SAMPLE



WHAT THE TASP® WRITING TEST MEASURES

Following is a list of elements measured in the TASP® writing sample. They overlap with elements measured in the objective portion of the examination (see page 40). As you work through the sample test items in this booklet, you may want to highlight the elements on the list that you have the most problem with. Then review the corresponding sections in *The Bedford Handbook*.

RHETORICAL ELEMENTS	SECTION IN THE BEDFORD HANDBOOK
1. Appropriateness	
a. Establishing a purpose and an audience	1a, 7a
b. Using appropriate language	17
2. Unity and Focus	
a. Focusing with a thesis	1c, 2a, 7b
b. Focusing with topic sentences	4a, e
c. Staying on focus	3a
3. Development	
a. Selecting appropriate evidence	1b, 47e
b. Supplying adequate evidence	4b
c. Refuting opposing arguments	47f
4. Effective Organization	
a. Organizing the whole essay	1d, 3a, 7b
b. Organizing paragraphs	4c
c. Linking ideas clearly	4e
EDITING ELEMENTS	
5. Effective Sentence Structure	
a. Correcting fragments, comma splices, and fused sentences	19, 20
b. Correcting problems with verbs (subject-verb agreement, nonstandard verb forms)	21, 27
c. Correcting problems with pronouns	22–25
d. Balancing parallel ideas	9
e. Untangling mixed constructions	11
f. Repairing misplaced and dangling modifiers	12
g. Eliminating distracting shifts	13
6. Usage	
a. Editing for commonly confused and misused words	Glossary of Usage
b. Choosing appropriate language	17
c. Selecting exact words	18
7. Mechanical Conventions	
a. Editing for punctuation	
1) The period	38a

EDITING ELEMENTS

**SECTION IN
THE BEDFORD HANDBOOK**

2) The question mark	38b
3) The exclamation point	38c
4) The comma	32a-j, 33a-h
5) Quotation marks	37a-g
6) The apostrophe	36a-e
7) The semicolon	34a-d
b. Editing for mechanics	
1) Spelling	43a-d
2) Capitalization	45a-g

Sample Essay Test

In the essay section of the test, you will be provided with a writing assignment to be developed in a 300-to-600-word essay. Scorers will consider how effectively you've argued a position and look at how well you've focused on your purpose and audience. They will also consider how well you have supported and organized your ideas. When you have finished drafting the essay, review your work and revise it as necessary. (You may not use reference materials while taking the test.)

Writing Topic

Because of increasing gang-related violent behavior in the schools, the principal of Central High has forbidden students to wear all black or all red, as rival gangs wear at a nearby school. Certain articles of clothing are also banned. By taking this action she hopes to decrease the risk of violence and hostility and increase genuine school spirit at Central. Those who disagree with her say that the hostility does not come from clothing but from other causes and that the gang members will merely choose different colors. Opponents charge, in addition, that prohibiting students to wear certain colors and articles of clothing is a violation of the First Amendment, which gives everyone the right to freedom of expression.

Write an essay that either supports or opposes the principal's decision to forbid students to wear certain colors and articles of clothing at Central High. Back your argument with relevant points and illustrations, and keep in mind that your audience is an instructor.

STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Knowing what is expected of you on the TASP® before you take the test gives you strength, confidence, and an edge. You have already registered and read the TASP® Test Registration Bulletin. You know, therefore, that you must produce a 300-to-600-word essay on a topic to be presented on the testing day. To find out how many words you produce per page, count a page or two in your handwriting; you cannot afford to waste time on the test day counting words. You also know that the essay must cover the exact topic given, be written in multiple paragraphs, and be legible enough to be read easily.

Getting a good night's rest before the test and getting up early enough in the morning so that you can eat something and not have to rush to the testing center will also be to your benefit. You want to focus your attention on the test itself, not on hassles created by haphazard planning.

USING THE WRITING PROCESS FOR TAKING THE TASP® TEST

As mentioned earlier, you can work through the TASP® test in any order you wish; you don't have to follow the sequence of the test booklet. Thinking ahead about how you want to work through the tasks, however, will help you do your best and probably increase your score, especially on the most important part of the writing test: the essay.

Most of us would agree that good writing takes time — certainly more time than is allowed on the TASP® test; however, organizing what time you have to its best advantage will help you write efficiently and effectively. Perhaps past writing instructors taught you steps of what has been called “the writing process” to create writing that communicates effectively. Even in the limited time you have for the essay, you can use those same steps to organize your writing. Here is a suggested sequence of steps for completing the whole TASP® test:

1. Read the writing assignment and identify the tasks it calls for. Identify the audience to whom your essay will be addressed.
2. Use prewriting strategies.
3. Draft your essay.
4. Complete the rest of the test — the reading, math, and objective writing sections.
5. Reread, revise, and edit the essay.
6. Copy the finished essay into the booklet.

1. Read the Writing Assignment and Identify Tasks

The TASP® test will require you to write an essay that takes a stand on a topic of concern. You will be given a description of a controversy and some arguments for the opposing stands on it. Do not worry that you won’t have anything to say about the topic. Test writers choose topics, officially called “writing prompts,” that all test takers can write about. The prompts are meant to get you started on producing a writing sample, not to confuse or stump you. Nonetheless, you must be careful to stick to the exact topic given.

The writing topic will appear in one of three formats, each of which asks you to take and support a stand on an issue. But each format sets up the argument in a different way. Format 1 gives just a brief outline of the argument; format 2 presents the two sides of the argument in more detail and in separate columns; and format 3 outlines the argument in a single paragraph but includes more detail from each side. Following are examples of each format.

The following practice test questions have been selected from those used in the last ten years to show you how students have prepared for and written the essay for the TASP test.

Format 1 Would a shortened workweek help relieve joblessness in this country? France is considering a four-day workweek to cut unemployment and improve workers’ quality of life. Germany now has a thirty-seven-hour workweek. Because people would work fewer hours, paychecks would be a little smaller, but more people would be at work. Would such a solution work in the United States?

Write an essay that either supports or opposes shortening the workweek. Back your argument with relevant points and illustrations, and keep in mind that your audience is an instructor.

Format 2**No Pass, No Play: Students Must Earn the Right to Sports and Extracurricular Activities**

More than ten years ago, a growing number of Texans were troubled about the fact that students who were failing classes could still participate in sports and other extracurricular activities. Individuals and groups informed the Texas legislature of their concern that schools were not making learning the first priority for all students. As a result, the legislature passed the No Pass, No Play law, which says that students must be passing in all courses at every grading period in order to participate in sports or other extracurricular activities. The legislature, therefore, enacted the law to help make sure that all students put education ahead of other school activities. Without such a law, can we be sure that learning will remain the top priority for all students in Texas?

Write an essay that either supports or opposes the No Pass, No Play law. Back your argument with relevant points and illustrations, and keep in mind that your audience is an instructor.

Format 3 Even though television programs must be labeled according to appropriateness, should Congress pass laws that ban or place restrictions on violent television shows? More Americans are growing concerned that such shows may cause people — especially children — to copy the violent acts they see. Recently, an Ohio boy who was playing with a lighter started a fire that killed his little sister — allegedly because he was imitating characters on *Beavis and Butt-head*. Researchers from universities and the media have done studies that back such links between violent programming and violent behavior in children. Those who oppose restrictions on programming, however, claim that there is no real proof that viewing violent shows leads to violent behavior. Further, they point out that producers are policing themselves by cutting the more violent episodes and moving shows from prime time to late night. Most important, they say that freedom of expression under the First Amendment must be protected.

Write an essay that either supports or opposes banning or restricting violent television shows. Back your argument with relevant points and illustrations, and keep in mind that your audience is an instructor.

No Pass, No Play: Students “Play It Safe” and Don’t Take the Challenging Courses

The No Pass, No Play law in Texas is again being challenged. Opponents argue that the law has allowed — and maybe even caused — too many students to take safe and easy courses so that they can continue to participate in sports and extracurricular activities. Further, say the critics of No Pass, No Play, it does not make sense to offer advanced courses in science, mathematics, history, and languages and then penalize students for finding them difficult. The critics also point out that the extracurricular activities may help students find their life’s work. The best way to motivate students, they maintain, is to help them pass their courses — not penalize them. Why should a student be kicked off a team for failing Physics II in a single six-week grading period?

First, notice that the writing prompt will require that you take a stand on an issue. That means that you must choose one side or the other and argue for only that one side; an essay that straddles the fence is not acceptable. The readers who will be scoring your writing do not care which side you have chosen, only that you have selected a side and presented an effective argument.

In addition, keep in mind that you will be writing an essay, not a letter or a speech. You should maintain a tone that is appropriate for the testing situation, the topic given, and the educators who will be reading your argument.

For practice, let's consider the following topic, a format 3 prompt:

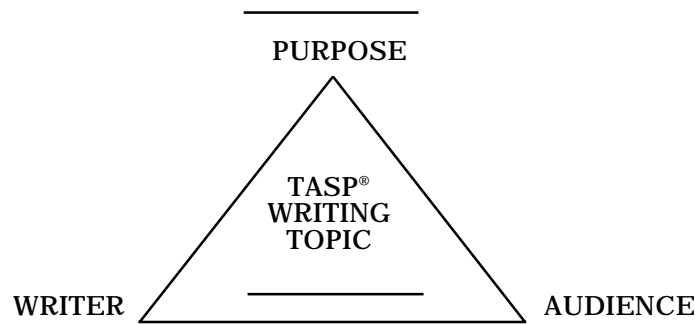
Writing Topic

The Texas State Board of Education recently endorsed a new and more rigorous high school curriculum. Under the new plan, students will be encouraged to take additional courses in areas such as computer literacy, science, math, and foreign language, thereby adding three more credits beyond the minimum currently required for graduation. Although the new curriculum is not yet required, schools are being asked to cooperate and implement it as soon as possible. Some contend that requiring additional courses is too expensive and might cause schools to take money away from other important areas. They also argue that the additional courses are not necessary for many students who do not plan to go on to college. Further, they point out that the new curriculum would require schools to bring in too many new subjects, thus drawing resources away from basic courses. On the other hand, those in favor of the additional courses say that the high school curriculum needs to be tougher because too many (about half) of the students now entering college must take remedial courses, a situation that costs taxpayers a great deal of money. In addition, they say that students will profit from the increased knowledge and ability at college and/or on the job.

Write an essay that either supports or opposes the new high school curriculum. Back your argument with relevant points and illustrations, and keep in mind that your audience is an instructor.

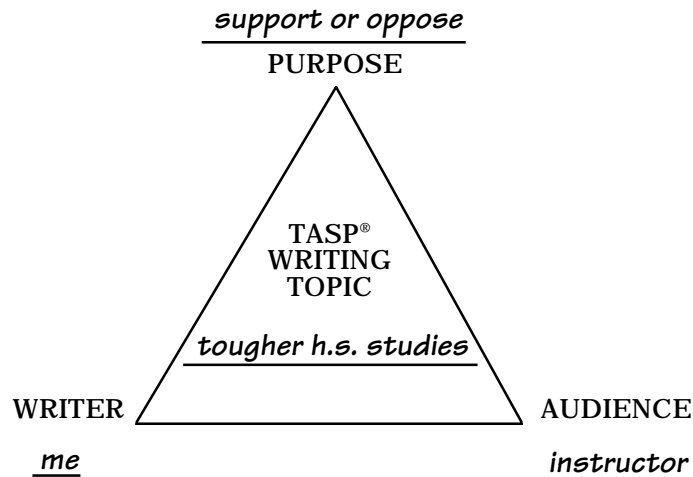
So what do you do next? We have all heard that a picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes a picture can help you create a thousand words, or at least the necessary 300 to 600 words for the TASP® writing sample. James Kinneavy in *A Theory of Discourse* (1980, Norton) writes about the various ways language works to communicate, and he illustrates his complex theory with drawings. He recalls and elaborates on the original “communication triangle” used by the Greek philosopher Aristotle for his study of rhetoric (communication). Greatly simplified and adapted to your writing assignment, the communication triangle can help you separate writing tasks and give you a chance to see the assignment in a new way: in pictures rather than in words alone. Students have already used this method successfully on the TASP® test.

The TASP® assignment specifies the writing topic, the purpose, and the audience, which is exactly what the triangle illustrates:



Draw the triangle on the scratch paper or preparation area of the test. Then after you have determined what the assignment wants you to do, fill in the specifics.

For the topic about the new and tougher high school curriculum, you would fill in the triangle like this:



2. Use Prewriting Strategies

Now you start thinking about your own high school experiences. You remember the exchange students from Japan and Germany who observed that American high school students spend so little time studying. You remember that even students from other states who enrolled at your school at midterm were ahead in your algebra class. You recall vividly your disappointment as a college freshman at being placed in a math course below college level. You remember also your friend Joe, who had to attend remedial classes in reading and math provided by the large insurance company that hired him.

Whoa. Now you need some help to subdue that chaos of ideas in your brain. You must get active. Write the ideas on paper where they will stop whirling and turning and sit still so you can look at them and make some decisions. Ultimately, what will most impress those instructors you are writing to — and the test scorers — is an essay

written by someone who cares about what he or she is writing and knows enough about the subject to make it interesting. Such an attitude will help you form a logical, well-supported argument.

You begin to think that the high schools need to be more rigorous and that requiring additional courses is a good idea. You quickly jot down your initial thoughts and decide to take the stand that Texas high schools would profit from the new curriculum.

Now that your stand or point of view is selected, you are ready for active prewriting activities. Section 1b of *The Bedford Handbook* suggests a number of ways to get started. Listing, clustering or branching, and asking questions would be most appropriate in this case. You need a simple but effective prewriting activity because you must quickly come up with as many ideas as possible that will support your stand. By choosing a stand, you have already declared the most important part of your thesis, sometimes also called the main idea or statement of purpose. Now you must use some prewriting strategies to generate support for your thesis. Once the planning is complete, you can make the thesis statement more particular with what we might call the “because clause,” the rationale for believing in the new law and the signal or suggestion to the reader about how you will present your argument.

You decide to try listing as a prewriting technique. So you use the practice areas and margins of the test booklet to jot down as many things as you can think of about the drawbacks of the current high school curriculum and the ways in which the new plan will improve students’ education. Your list should look similar to this:

Tougher High School Studies

exchange students say courses too easy
new classmate from Iowa ahead in math class
developmental math class for me — and I got B’s in high school math
lots of my college friends in developmental math, reading, and writing
college courses from the beginning (instead of starting with remedial courses)
college in four years rather than five or six
Joe taking math and reading at work
pictures on hamburger eatery cash register instead of numbers
businesses testing all candidates for jobs and complaining that high school
graduates can’t read, spell, or calculate
relationship between knowledge and pride
better jobs

You decide that the listing has produced plenty to work with, if not too much. Section 1c of *The Bedford Handbook* will help you move from your list to the completion of your thesis.

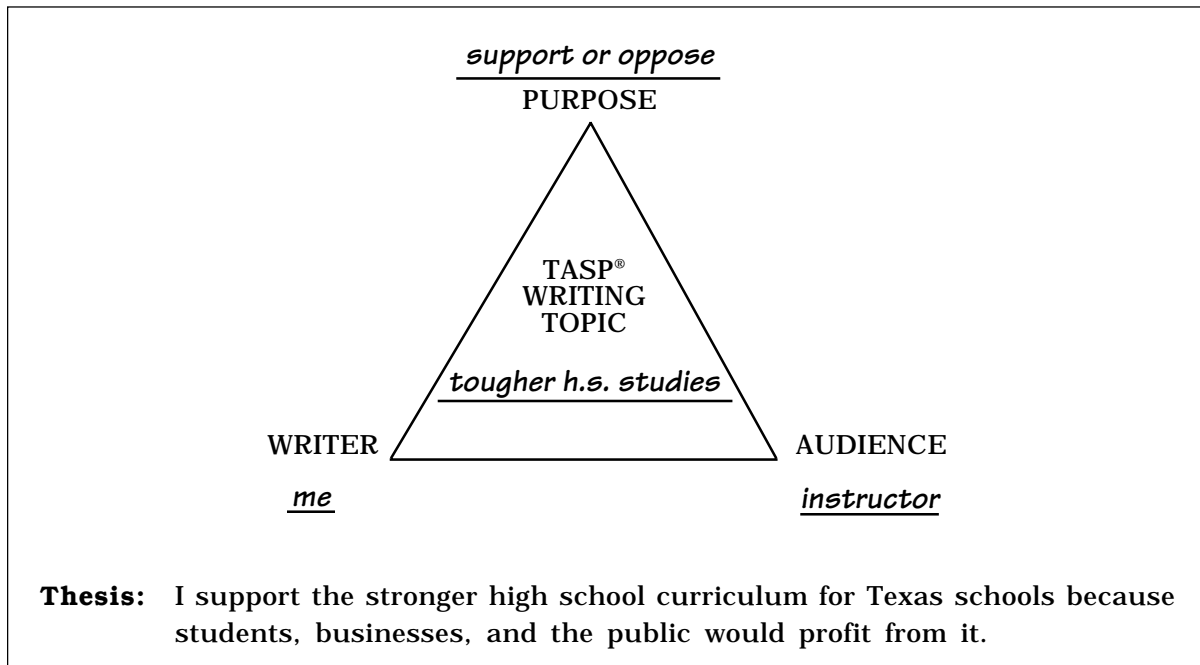
Studying your brainstorming list again, you begin to see categories emerge. For instance, the first ideas on the list show how the new curriculum would benefit students, so you jot down *students* next to them. Then you see that some other ideas on the list could be used to show how the curriculum would benefit businesses. Working through your list, you come up with three groups who would benefit from more chal-

lenging courses being added to the high school curriculum: students, businesses, and the public. The following labeled list has gathered some additions, which happens frequently when writers are working with ideas.

Tougher High School Studies

<i>students/drawbacks of current system</i>	exchange students say courses too easy
<i>students/drawbacks of current system</i>	new classmate from Iowa ahead in math class
<i>students/drawbacks of current system</i>	developmental math class for me — and I got B's in high school math
<i>students/drawbacks of current system</i>	lots of my college friends in developmental math, reading, and writing
<i>students/benefits of change</i>	college courses from the beginning
<i>students/benefits of change</i>	college in four years rather than five (which saves money)
<i>students/benefits of change</i>	high schools truly preparing students for college or the work world
<i>businesses</i>	Joe taking math and reading at work
<i>businesses</i>	errors in reading, writing, and math cause businesses to lose money
<i>businesses</i>	pictures on hamburger eatery cash register instead of numbers
<i>businesses</i>	businesses testing all candidates for jobs and complaining that high school graduates can't read, spell, or calculate
<i>public</i>	citizens complain that high school graduates can't read, spell, or calculate (how, then, can they be knowledgeable voters?)
<i>public</i>	relationship between knowledge and pride (a partnership that makes productive citizens)
<i>public</i>	better jobs (which leads to paying taxes sooner)

When you've finished your labeled list, you might want to go back over it to see if you can cross off any ideas that are not too promising. This will help you focus your thesis. After going over the list, you decide that all three categories of ideas will work well to support your point of view, so you complete your thesis:



3. Draft Your Essay

Many writers try to start out with an introduction, work their way through the body of the essay, and then write a conclusion. If you have a good idea of what the body of your essay will say, however, you may want to skip the introduction for now and start with the body. Begin where you know what you want to say. If you begin with the body, just leave some space for the introduction so that you can come back to it later.

The Introduction Because your audience has no idea who you are and what you are going to talk about, you must provide some background. Don't just throw your thesis at your readers; that would be similar to a stranger coming up to you and saying, "Come on. Let's go." Most likely you would not go along. Likewise, your readers won't be ready to go with you until you draw them in and enlighten them — you have to find a way to get them interested, to hook them into reading the entire essay.

What first? Let's say you saw Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* and ran into a good friend the next day. You probably would not begin by saying, "The dinosaurs were better than I thought they'd be" or "Hammond is sure different in the book." You would start by telling the person that you had been to the movies, had seen *Jurassic Park*, and had or had not liked it. You would also point out that you had read the book before you saw the movie. Having established that information, you could then discuss your thesis "It was a great movie" or "It was a great movie but. . . ." In conversation we ease into what we want to say. Now let's try it in writing with the topic we have been working on. Following is an introduction that you might use:

Texas education has hope now that the State Board of Education is supporting a plan for a high school curriculum that is more in-depth and in tune with today's needs. When students graduate from high school they will know what they need to know. *I support the stronger high school curriculum for Texas schools because students, businesses, and the public would profit from it.*

For additional examples of introductory paragraphs, see 2a and 47c in *The Bedford Handbook*.

The Body In the body of the essay, you develop your thesis, using the ideas you've generated in the prewriting stage. Keep the filled-in communication triangle in front of you to refer to. Each of the main points of the thesis will probably take a paragraph or two to develop. The instructions ask you to use multiple paragraphs, so don't write the entire essay in one. And don't agonize over every word; just get the ideas down. Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence and use specifics to support and prove the topic sentence. (See 4a–d in *The Bedford Handbook* for advice on developing topic sentences.) To keep your readers on track, you will need transitions when moving from one sentence to the next and from one paragraph to the next. (See 4e in *The Bedford Handbook*.) Once you think you have covered everything and you begin to recognize an order in your writing that holds up and makes sense, you are probably ready for the conclusion.

The Conclusion For the TASP® test you must write a concluding paragraph. Without a conclusion, your essay will lose points. The conclusion must do more than merely repeat the thesis (see 2c in *The Bedford Handbook*). It doesn't have to be long; you need only leave the reader convinced of your message and satisfied by a sense that the essay is complete. Once you have drafted the conclusion, begin the rest of the test even though the essay is still in rough-draft form.

4. Complete the Rest of the Test

This advice might surprise you, but it is the key to being successful at writing for this test: Leave the writing that you have worked over heatedly, perhaps even passionately. It needs to cool down. By going on to the math and reading sections and then to the objective writing questions you will be giving yourself some distance from your essay, making it somewhat less familiar to you. When you do return to revise and edit, you will be a better, more objective reader.

5. Reread, Revise, and Edit the Essay

First read the essay through, paying close attention to its voice and message. Does it sound like you as it should? If not, you might want to reword certain passages.

Now that you are almost ready to copy the final essay into the booklet, put yourself in the position of a stranger reading it and try to assume some of a stranger's neutrality and distance. Keep in mind that your readers must be able to follow what you have said and that the essay must make sense and communicate a message. Ask yourself the following questions and see the indicated sections of the chart on pages 4–5 for appropriate advice from *The Bedford Handbook*.

Are you aware of your readers' needs? (1: Appropriateness)

Do you stay focused on the topic throughout the essay? (2: Unity and Focus)

Do you support your thesis? (3: Development)

Can readers follow the organization? (4: Effective Organization)

Answering these questions can help you see where you need to revise your writing. Revision is not as mysterious as it may seem because you have only three choices: (1) put in, (2) take out, or (3) rearrange. Does your writing need any of these important adjustments?

Finally, look at sentence structure, usage, and mechanics — and correct any errors. Look especially for serious errors: fragments, run-ons (comma splices and fused sentences), incorrect verb forms (including missing *-s* and *-ed* endings), and nonstandard usage. Be alert for any other problems that are your particular “demons”: maybe mixed constructions, dangling modifiers, shifts, faulty pronoun references, or missing apostrophes. The charts on pages 60 and 61 of *The Bedford Handbook* list potential problems that you may need to look for.

6. Copy the Finished Essay into the Booklet

Your handwriting does not have to be beautiful, but it does have to be legible. Keep those readers in a good mood. Make it easy for them to appreciate what you have written. Finally, put your pencil down and read what you've copied into the booklet to be sure you didn't leave out a word or even an entire line. Okay. That's it. Hand the booklet to the proctor and celebrate. You survived and probably passed the essay portion of the test.

SAMPLE ESSAYS WITH SCORES

This section of the booklet provides four sample essays, each representing a different score. Word lengths are provided for each essay to help you develop a sense of the 300-to-600-word limit prescribed by the TASP®. Following are descriptions, based on the rhetorical and editing elements listed on pages 4–5, of the four scoring levels.

A 4 PAPER

Effectively makes its point to the audience stated in the writing prompt. The sample is well written, presents a clear purpose, and stays focused on that purpose. Points are developed with relevant details and examples. (In short, the writer has taken into account all the rhetorical and editing elements listed on pages 4–5.)

A 3 PAPER

Shows the writer's effort to make a point to the audience stated in the writing prompt; however, the paper may not be fully developed according to its purpose, and the organization may not be completely effective. Though the writing is adequate, the writer may make minor errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics.

A 2 PAPER

Does not present a clear purpose and is poorly developed. The writing is not focused and though the writer may have made an attempt to organize information, that organization is weak. Numerous errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics interfere with the writer's message.

A 1 PAPER

Reflects the writer's effort to make a point but does not appropriately address the purpose and audience. The writer may not state his or her main idea, and supporting details are minimal or confusing. Organization may be illogical or virtually lacking. Numerous errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics interfere with the writer's message. Finally, the essay may not meet the 300-word minimum.

Writing Topic Even though television programs must be labeled according to appropriateness, should Congress pass laws that ban or place restrictions on violent television shows? More Americans are growing concerned that such shows may cause people — especially children — to copy the violent acts they see. Recently, an Ohio boy who was playing with a lighter started a fire that killed his little sister — allegedly because he was imitating characters on *Beavis and Butt-head*. Researchers from universities and the media have done studies that back such links between violent programming and violent behavior in children. Those who oppose restrictions on programming, however, claim that there is no real proof that viewing violent shows leads to violent behavior. Further, they point out that producers are policing themselves by cutting the more violent episodes and moving shows from prime time to late night. Most important, they say that freedom of expression under the First Amendment must be protected.

Write an essay that either supports or opposes banning or restricting violent television shows. Back your argument with relevant points and illustrations, and keep in mind that your audience is an instructor.

Sample Essay with a High Score (4)

Because freedom of expression is a constitutional right, Americans have access to a wide variety of televised information and entertainment — some of which certain viewers consider violent or offensive. Some Americans believe that Congress should ban or restrict such programs to protect people — especially children — who might be negatively influenced by what they see on television. Such a practice, however, raises serious questions: How will the government decide what to restrict, and how far will it go? How can Americans be sure that one act of Congress won't open up a Pandora's box of restrictions that seriously limit the breadth of information and entertainment that television provides? To protect freedom of expression and variety in programming, the responsibility to restrict any TV shows must continue to rest with individuals — not government. Parents must monitor their children. Producers, under pressure from concerned citizens, must monitor themselves.

Television programs provide us with a way of seeing things that we would not otherwise see, of imagining other lives and situations. Even shows that might be considered violent or offensive can be instructive. Take, for instance, real-life police and rescue shows, which often show shoot-outs, accidents, and other violent scenes. Though such scenes are undoubtedly disturbing, they let viewers see what police officers and rescue workers go through. They also help viewers avoid or cope with dangerous situations. If we allow Congress to restrict violence in shows like *Beavis and Butt-head*, how can we be assured that they won't also restrict shows in which violent scenes are used to a positive end?

In addition, restrictions on programming would rob individuals of the right to decide what they and their children should and shouldn't watch. Parents would be deprived of the responsibility and opportunity to help children learn from what they see. As a child, whenever I was watching TV, so was one of my parents. As I watched different programs, I learned from what I saw and from discussions I had with my parents. If my parents believed that a certain show was too adult for me, they changed the channel or sent me off to play. It is the parents who must keep informed about what is showing and what their children would enjoy and profit from watching as well as what might disturb them. It doesn't take an act of Congress to protect a child from what can be seen on television. It takes an act of responsibility from a loving, caring parent.

Those who support restrictions on certain programs might argue that not all children have responsible, attentive parents; thus, the government must act as a parent. It is not realistic or desirable, however, for government to assume such a role, especially when any good that comes from this is balanced against protection of First Amendment rights and the free flow of information. Citizens who are concerned about programming must act independently, pressuring television stations and producers to curb needless violence in shows. Such pressure does work; *Beavis and Butt-head* was moved to a later time slot after viewers complained about its content.

Despite concerns about how television might negatively affect viewers, decisions about what to air and what to watch are too important to leave to the government. To protect a few, the rights of the majority cannot be legislated away. (555 words)

Explanation: Why the Essay Received a High Score (4) The writer takes a stand in the first paragraph, stating a clear thesis — that, in order to protect the freedom of individuals, the responsibility to monitor and restrict television programming must rest with viewers, not government. The writer develops points fully, sticking to the thesis and providing specific examples to build a logical argument. He even anticipates, and answers, a potential argument from opponents — that not all parents may be able to adequately monitor what their children watch. In addition, the language he uses is appropriate to his topic and audience. Sentences are clear and varied, and the words are well chosen. The writer provides a conclusion that restates the main point and makes a strong statement.

Usage, punctuation, and spelling are correct, with the exception of an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement in the last sentence of the second paragraph: “how can we be assured that they won't also restrict” should be “how can we be assured that it won't also restrict.” The pronoun *it* must agree with its singular antecedent, *Congress*. (See 22 in *The Bedford Handbook*.)

Sample Essay with a Good Score (3)

It should not matter if we are a fan of *Beavis and Butt-head* or any other controversial program on television. The fact still remains that it is the television producers first Amendment right to air these programs. If we the people let Congress change the Constitution of the United States over something like this, then we are allowing government to take away or change our rights as we know them. That should never happen.

I feel it is the legal guardians responsibility to teach, monitor, or edit television for the children. Shows such as *Beavis and Butt-head* are being used as scapegoats for

terrible accidents that have occurred recently. But the fact still remains that the children involved should have been able to use common sense not to perform these horrible acts.

Twenty years ago, you didn't hear about shows being blamed for their viewers' behavior. *Bugs Bunny* was never targeted. Stop and think what some of these *Bugs Bunny* cartoons are about. There was a guy named Elmer Fudd running around with a loaded shotgun with blatant disregard to what or where he was shooting. You didn't hear about the tragic hunting accident that next season with some father telling the reporter "its all Elmer Fudds fault. If my son wouldn't have seen it on *Bugs Bunny* then this accident would have never happened."

Several years ago there was another controversial cartoon that touched a nerve, *The Simpsons*. But once all the media hipe was over, the issue seemed to die out. In fact, that program is still playing.

I am not making fun or taking any of these accidents lightly. I am sorry that they happened and feel bad for the people they touched. However, it's not going to make it any better to blame a television show. We have to accept our responsibilities and stop trying to use television programs as an excuse. We must learn from them and enjoy them, not use them to hide behind. (335 words)

Explanation: Why the Essay Received a Good Score (3) The writer clearly states the topic and the stand he will take, and the language and style are appropriate to the audience and purpose. The essay generally keeps to the topic, and it's fairly well developed, although the fourth paragraph could be fleshed out more and tied more closely to the argument. A questionable argument is presented in paragraph 2, where the author places the responsibility for dealing with the influences of television programs on the children themselves. However, the charge to parents and guardians that precedes this argument might explain and soften it. The writer strengthens his argument by referring to the Bugs Bunny cartoons in paragraph 3. The conclusion effectively reiterates the argument and ends with a strong statement that pulls the entire essay together.

There are some weaknesses in sentence structure and mechanics. Although generally clear, sentences exhibit little variety. The point of view changes from first to second person then back to first, but this problem is not particularly distracting. (See 13a in *The Bedford Handbook*.) The writer leaves out apostrophes where they are needed to form possessives or contractions: *producers* in paragraph 1, *guardians* in paragraph 2, and *its* and *Fudds* in paragraph 3. (See 36 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) The writer also has some problems with spelling and capitalization. The words *blatant* in paragraph 3 and *hype* in paragraph 4 are misspelled. In the first paragraph, both words of *First Amendment* should be capitalized, and in the third paragraph, the *its* beginning the quotation should be capitalized. (See 45 in *The Bedford Handbook*.)

Sample Essay with a Fair Score (2)

I think that Congress should ban the program of *Beavis and Butt-head* for the following reasons.

First of all, the program shows to many violent sceens. The kids who see this program will think it's o.k. for them to do it especially if they don't get punished or get

caught by their parents. One scene that I saw from *Beavis and Butt-head* was very disturbing to me, since I'm an animal lover. In the program they show where the two little kids put a little puddle inside of a dryer, and they push the start button on. The kids laughed while the puddle was going around getting dried in the dryer. If I was a kid I would have done the same thing after I saw the show.

Secondly, why do we want to see a show that teaches us and shows us how to be more destructive and violent. As it is we already have a lot of violence in our streets and in our country. What we need is to have programs that will encourage our children to stay in school and study hard to succeed in life. Although the violence that kids see on television and in the streets making it hard to pay attention to school.

Last, the parents shouldn't let their children watch the program. If the parents see the show, the kids will see their parents are enjoying the show, so the kids will go out and do the same thing since nothing wrong with doing what the kids are doing on television. Because they do what they see.

Finally, I strongly believe that Congress should ban the show *Beavis and Butt-head* for the above reasons that I have said. The last thing we need is for our young children to become destructive and violent at such a young age. We already have too many kids like that in this country. Ban the program. To protect our children from becoming like the characters in the program of *Beavis and Butt-head*. (340 words)

Explanation: Why the Essay Received a Fair Score (2) The writer states her stand on the topic in the first paragraph but provides no introduction. The language and style are appropriate except for minor lapses from the formal to the informal (*o.k.* instead of *all right* or *acceptable* and *kids* rather than *children*), and the writer stays focused on the topic. She attempts to develop the essay with an introductory paragraph, three paragraphs supporting her stand, and a concluding paragraph. It's possible that the essay was stunted by this five-paragraph form, which has been taught in many schools as *the* essay form. If the writer had worked more with ideas rather than trying to make the essay fit the form, the essay might have been more successful. The fourth paragraph is especially unclear. The second sentence doesn't flow logically from the first, and it doesn't necessarily follow that all parents who watch a show like *Beavis and Butt-head* will enjoy it. Also, it's not clear what "the same thing" refers to. The transitional *First*, *Secondly*, and *Last* are somewhat awkward since they are not parallel in construction. Also, using *Finally* for the closing paragraph after using *Last* for the previous paragraph bewilders rather than assists. The writer provides a conclusion but weakens it with the vague phrase "for the above reasons that I have said."

The essay has numerous problems with sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics. In fact, much of the confusion in paragraph 4 may be caused by a lack of attention to sentence structure. Sentence fragments are found in paragraphs 3, 4, and 5: "Although the violence that kids see on television and in the streets making it hard to pay attention to school," "Because they do what they see," and "To protect our children from becoming like the characters in the program of *Beavis and Butt-head*." (See 19 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) The writer also has problems with pronouns and antecedents. The second sentence in paragraph 2 uses a pronoun (*it*) without a clear reference to its antecedent, and the fourth sentence of paragraph 2 begins, "In the program they show," with no clear antecedent for *they*. (See 23 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) As for problems

with punctuation, the first sentence in the third paragraph should end with a question mark. Finally, the essay contains spelling errors: *to* instead of *too*, *sceens* instead of *scenes*, and *puddle* instead of *poodle*.

Sample Essay with a Poor Score (1)

First of all, before my younger cousens are four and five they wnt to bung thur heds. Just like Beavis and Butt-head. They make bood on thur heds. Maybe they will loose thur brains. It is danger like they say. I just know that my cousens like that show.

Maybe they should band that show. But I do'nt know. Many peopel who watch the show like my friends. They say is a good show. But kids will learn from the program but they to will show them things like that. Movies show things like that to. Even the ones they are showing bad things and bad langage. Another thing is realty. Kids are good at following peopels step. If they see them doing it or saying it and lead them to.

I do hope that some one wil do some things to fix the bad programs. To me it seems the programs are geting away with it. Not only that violence and accidance will increesing because the kids are the one to do it. (175 words)

Explanation: Why the Essay Received a Poor Score (1) The writer is indecisive and does not take a stand, and his language and style, for the most part, are inappropriate. The essay virtually lacks focus. The writer begins with a concrete example of a concern about the influence of the program on his young cousins but then straddles the fence by talking about how his friends enjoy the show. Thereafter he veers off into a disorganized and illogical discussion of movies and children's inclination to follow the example of adults. Apparently the writer has no plan for development and organization, and as a result the important rhetorical elements are weak.

In fact, communication breaks down entirely in this essay, and sentence-level problems abound. The essay contains numerous fragments: "Just like Beavis and Butt-head," "Many peopel who watch the show like my friends," "Even the ones they are showing bad things and bad langage," "If they see them doing it or saying it and lead them to," and "Not only that violence and accidance will increesing because the kids are the one to do it." (See 19 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) The writer has problems punctuating contractions and possessives: *do'nt* should be *don't* and *peopels* should be *people's*. (See 36 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) Also, there are numerous spelling errors: *cousens*, "wnt . . . bung thur heds," *loose* instead of *lose*, *band* instead of *ban*, *peopel*, *langage*, *realty*, *wil*, *geting*, *accidance*, *increesing*, and *to* instead of *too*. There are other errors too numerous to mention. Finally, the essay does not meet the 300-word minimum.

PRACTICE WITH SCORING SAMPLE ESSAYS

Following are four sample essays without scores for you to read and evaluate. Use the scoring guide and scored essays in the previous section as a reference. Also, you might want to consult the rhetorical and editing elements in the chart on pages 4–5. By studying more essays written for TASP®-type questions and evaluating their significant features, you can begin to train your eye to judge your own writing. The four essays in this section do not necessarily represent four different scores. Following each essay, space is provided for you to evaluate the writing and assign a score. You might

begin by creating a communication triangle for the writing topic — and maybe even by writing an essay on the topic yourself. A discussion of each essay, with suggested scores, concludes the section.

Writing Topic

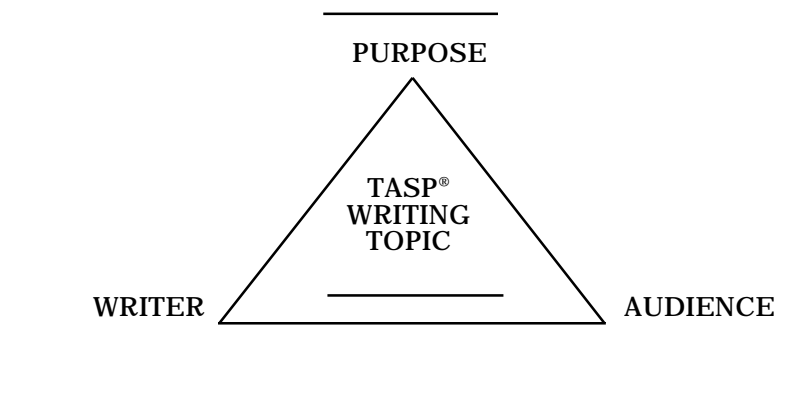
No Pass, No Play: Students Must Earn the Right to Sports and Extracurricular Activities

More than ten years ago, a growing number of Texans were troubled about the fact that students who were failing classes could still participate in sports and other extracurricular activities. Individuals and groups informed the Texas legislature of their concern that schools were not making learning the first priority for all students. As a result, the legislature passed the No Pass, No Play law, which says that students must be passing in all courses at every grading period in order to participate in sports or other extracurricular activities. The legislature, therefore, enacted the law to help make sure that all students put education ahead of other school activities. Without such a law, can we be sure that learning will remain the top priority for all students in Texas?

Write an essay that either supports or opposes the No Pass, No Play law. Back your argument with relevant points and illustrations, and keep in mind that your audience is an instructor.

No Pass, No Play: Students “Play It Safe” and Don’t Take the Challenging Courses

The No Pass, No Play law in Texas is again being challenged. Opponents argue that the law has allowed — and maybe even caused — too many students to take safe and easy courses so that they can continue to participate in sports and extracurricular activities. Further, say the critics of No Pass, No Play, it does not make sense to offer advanced courses in science, mathematics, history, and languages and then penalize students for finding them difficult. The critics also point out that the extracurricular activities may help students find their life’s work. The best way to motivate students, they maintain, is to help them pass their courses — not penalize them. Why should a student be kicked off a team for failing Physics II in a single six-week grading period?



Essay 1

The No Pass, No Play issue has become controversial again over the last couple of years. I think it has even caused our students to put too much stress on themselves to pass certain classes. I am against the No Pass, No Play rule for several reasons.

One of my main reasons is that many students are taking easy or under average classes so they don't have all the stress on themselves. Many of the students would do really well in advanced classes, but they are afraid that they might have a failing grade one six weeks and not be able to continue in their extracurricular activities. We ask these students not to do their best by forcing them just to get passing grades however they can.

We also need to consider something else. Students who are in advanced classes are trying to get the best education they possibly can, so why should they be punished if they have some minor problems for one six-week grading period? It can be really hard for some of these students with two or three honors classes to keep above-average grades. Most of them are striving to get into the best possible college they can plus have a social life. If the student is taking a heavy load and gets behind in one subject, say Calculus, they should not be punished for a whole six weeks for a little mistake or weakness that they will probably make up for later.

Many students have dreams in some of the extracurricular activities that they participate in. It can range from sports (football-golf), band or music, livestock judging, and even coaching or teaching careers. If these students are not able to participate they may never have the chance to follow those dreams. In high school I studied food technology. I was one of the best judges on our meat judging team, and was set to go to Texas A & M University to a meat judging contest. I was hoping to get a scholarship to study food technology at Tarleton State University in Stephenville. My dreams where shatered because I had a bad six weeks in algebra II, one of my hardest subjects. I was even going to a private tutor.

As you can see this rule does put alot of stress and unecessary regulations on these students. This rule is just making the education level of our students just decrease dramatically. If the state wants to help the students they need to put more teachers with the students and help the students to pass instead of forcing them. (436 words)

Strengths of the Essay

Weaknesses of the Essay

Your Score _____

Essay 2

The policy of No Pass, No Play was a start in the right direction for the Texas legislature. Ten years have gone by and it seems to be a real success. In my opinion, it teaches a young student/athlete that there is more out there in life than sports. It gives the youths more responsibility and teaches the athletes that sports are extracurricular activities, not mandatory. One must work to have extra benefits.

As a athlete myself the law came into affect when I was in middle school. Sports kept me out of trouble and kept me entertained while other did misdoings. I was not that smart, but I could play sports and I knew I was good at it. My future was depending on sports (basketball). The thing now was that I had to do just as well in class than in the gym. The policy pushed me and it helped me out in the long run preparing me for the future. The policy even made the athletes get closer because we had to push each other so we could play together. Everyone had to pass. The team got together and made sure that whoever was struggling in school got help. I know through my experience that the team overcame the policy. As the year went by, all the athletes thought about was passing instead of worrying about the No Pass, No Play policy. We knew that it was something simple that could be overcome. Sports helped me grow up in life, but if it was not for the policy of No Pass, No Play, I might not be where I am today. Basketball was over for me because of an injury, but life still had a future for me. I had to go live life and finish my schooling. The policy put me where I am today and will put me in a better place when I recieve my degree. I am proud of the legislature for have the No Pass, No Play policy.

Adoloscents seem to always find a new way to get in trouble. Extracurricular activities keep most children out of trouble, most of the time. These extracurricular activities are helpful in many ways. It makes the kids feel like they belong to something. The extracurricular activities are benefits to the schools. Schools are there to teach, not to learn how to play sports. That is the main priority for schools. Now that I have grown up, I will make sure when I have children that their grades are good so they can particpate in extra activities. The extra activities make people get closer and help children unite with one another and that is the way they should attack the No Pass, No Play policy.

Students should not go the easy route. This is where parents should come into effect. Make sure your child is taking the correct cources. I feel that ethics somes into effect here. Teach the children the difference between right and wrong and teach them that school is a priority number One, while everything else is priority number two. Students have to be taught that extra activities will be gone one day but one's education will be with you forever. After high school most athletes turn into full-time students and that is a fact. Sports and other activities are hard to continue. If the student is able to continue, that is great. The student has to have something he or she can fall back upon though. What about life after these activities are over. What will these students be. They cannot play sports or be in band for the rest of their lifes.

I say keep the policy it helps kids in the long run. The policy pushes athletes to grow up quicker. Teaches responsibility and makes one learn, which is the main reason we go to school for. There is more in life than extracurricular activities and its too late to find out that one should have tried harder in school when one had the oppportunity. The opportunity comes once so you must teach these kids to take advantage of it. (695 words)

Strengths of the Essay

Weaknesses of the Essay

Your Score _____

Essay 3

The No Pass, No Play rule is a sound policy and necessary for effective education in Texas. Too many high school students are inclined to put their efforts into excelling at sports and other activities. Academic studies are therefore ignored.

Sporting events are fun and great exercise; however, studies show that only about two percent of the students involved in these events actually move on to careers based on their expertise on the playing field. When students are challenged intellectually, however, infinite possibilities emerge. For instance, if Joe enjoys playing golf but also does well in algebra, geometry, and perhaps even physics, he could become a sought-after developer of contemporary golf courses. Imagine how much more fulfilling it would be for Joe to play his favorite game on a course of his own design.

Another student — Ray — lives for the game of basketball, but he is talented in academic areas as well. His forte seems to be the mathematics and drawing plus the imagination needed in architecture. If Ray puts intense effort into the study of architecture, he could well be the sports arena designer of the future. He could shoot hoops in a building he designed himself.

On the other hand, I remember Debbie the cheerleader. Before No Pass, No Play, Debbie was allowed to live for cheerleading alone. She had trouble concentrating on her academic courses, so she opted for the easier courses and applied herself very little if at all. Anyway, most teachers graded on the curve for athletes and cheerleaders, so she didn't have to worry. In the spring, when the rest of the class was planning for graduation, Debbie decided to marry and quit school. Unfortunately, she did not live happily ever after. Now she is divorced and the mother of two children whom she supported with minimum-wage jobs while she completed her GED. She is struggling with college and a job to provide for herself and her children. No Pass, No Play might have helped her.

If students are allowed to play sports while their grades suffer, they will not learn to distinguish between what is fun and what is truly important. Therefore, I applaud the Texas legislature for its action. All the Joes, Rays, and Debbies will profit from this policy by learning to create a balance between their academic and extracurricular activities, with some combining them into their life's work.

To everything there is a season. There's a time to laugh, a time to cry, a time to live a time to die, and — yes — a time to play and a time to study. The No Pass, No Play

rule has helped make partners of the academic and extracurricular sides of high school. Such a partnership can only benefit students. (460 words)

Strengths of the Essay

Weaknesses of the Essay

Your Score _____

Essay 4

After ten years, I see that the No Pass, No Play rule is an effective way of getting students to do well in school. Of course at the time I disagreed with the rule, but now, as a young adult, I can see that education is much more important than scoring the winning touchdown.

I support No Pass, No Play because students are in school to receive an education. That's what school is for. Yup, that's it. There's no way around it. And schools, whether high school, college, technical, vocational, or even beauty school are there to provide students with an education and extracurricular activities are merely a privilege. It's not mandatory for schools to have a football team, cheerleading squad, or chess club. These organizations are there to boost the school. No team will go to any competition on their own. They go to represent the school.

So it shouldn't be a problem if Johnny the star quarterback fails a class, right? After all, he's there to go on to college. Unfortunately, parents, teachers, students, and coaches have a tendency to lose it when he fails. After all, Johnny wants to go to college to play ball. He will be recruited by major universities, get entertained like there's no tomorrow, and then take off for the pros. He'll be a millionaire by the time he's thirty. It doesn't matter if Johnny doesn't know how many zeros are in a million.

And what about Yvonne the head cheerleader who doesn't know the capital of her own state? Who cares if Julie the drum major can't name all of Jupiter's moons? Does it matter if the president of the chess club doesn't know who Hercules is?

The question is whether the bottom line is to give these kids a good time or an education to better themselves. It's not about who can bring home a state or district championship. It's about kids receiving a chance to better themselves. Here I am five years out of high school and I don't give a damn about the homecoming queen or if the soccer team won against South San. Sure, extracurricular activities may provide good memories, but memories won't get anybody very far in college, put a roof over anyone's head, or provide food for the table.

Face it: knowing math, history, science, literature, and other subjects is very important. The knowledge is helpful even to someone who doesn't go to college. Unlike state championships, a diploma and education are things that can be remembered and never taken away. (425 words)

Strengths of the Essay

Weaknesses of the Essay

Your Score _____

DISCUSSION OF SAMPLE ESSAYS

Comments on Essay 1

The essay's introduction shows awareness of the audience and makes clear the writer's stand on the issue. The language and style are suitable, and the essay is fairly focused. The writer wants the reader to know the problems with the No Pass, No Play rule: that students are taking easy classes in order to participate in extracurricular activities, that students taking advanced classes are not given the special consideration they deserve, and that the activities themselves help some students find a career. The conclusion ties the ideas together. Though the organization and development of the essay are adequate, they show some ambiguities and weaknesses. For example, paragraph 3, which generally points out the disadvantages of the new curriculum to students who take advanced classes, is interrupted by an unrelated sentence about the students' college aspirations and social life. The last sentence in paragraph 2 — stating that students are being asked to do less than their best — is hard to believe. However, changing the order of words so that the sentence reads, "We force these students into not doing their best by asking them just to get passing grades . . ." might bring the meaning closer to what the writer intended.

Though sentences are fairly well formed, some have structural problems. For instance, the list of activities in paragraph 4 is not parallel. (See 9 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) And in the last paragraph, an awkward sentence weakens an otherwise good conclusion: "This rule is just making the education level of our students just decrease dramatically." Word choice is generally good, though it's not clear what the writer means by "under average classes." The essay contains errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement: "If the student . . . they" in paragraph 3 and "Many students have dreams. . . . It" in paragraph 4. (See 22 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) There are also errors in spelling: *where*

shatered, alot, and unnecessary. There are minor problems with capitalization. The writer capitalizes *calculus*, which does not name a specific course, but not *Algebra II*, which does. (See 45 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) Score = 3.

Comments on Essay 2

The introduction of the main idea and the writer's stand on No Pass, No Play are clear, and, generally, the language and style are appropriate. Although the essay begins well, its main focus — that studies should come before other activities — is not maintained. Paragraph 3 speaks of the value of extracurricular activities but does not relate this point to the No Pass, No Play condition that studies and grades should come first. In addition, two consecutive sentences in paragraph 3 contradict each other, perhaps because they lack a transitional device (“The extracurricular activities are benefits to the schools. Schools are there to teach, not to learn how to play sports”). Note also how the clause “not to learn how to play sports” seems to refer to *schools*. The lack of unity is particularly noticeable in paragraph 4, where the argument becomes preachy and takes an abrupt turn to the prescriptive. In addition, the audience appears to change from an instructor to parents with school-age children. Notice, too, how the writer shifts to the *you* point of view. (See 13a in *The Bedford Handbook*.) The second paragraph does a good job of describing how athletes can use teamwork to succeed in class, but after this paragraph, the essay's plan of development breaks down, and the writer provides few transitional words and phrases to help the reader. The rest of the essay does not address the thesis — that the rule benefits students because it demands more responsibility from them. A conclusion is attempted but is not effective.

The essay has many problems with grammar and mechanics. For example, the first sentence of the second paragraph contains four errors: two errors in usage (“a athlete” and “came into affect”), a missing comma, and a dangling modifier. (See the Glossary of Usage, 32b, and 12e in *The Bedford Handbook*.) The second sentence of the same paragraph lacks a needed -s ending on the word *other*. And in the third sentence the pronoun *it* lacks a clear antecedent. (See 23 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) In the fourth sentence the word *depending* is misused in an odd way; perhaps the writer meant *dependent*, but a better sentence would be “My future depended on sports (basketball).” At the end of the second paragraph and in the middle of the third paragraph, the writer also misuses words: “for have the No Pass, No Play policy” instead of “for having the No Pass, No Play policy” and “activities are benefits to the schools” instead of “activities are beneficial to the schools” or “activities benefit the schools.” Other serious errors are the fused sentence that begins the last paragraph and the fragment and mixed construction in the same paragraph: “Teaches responsibility and makes one learn, which is the main reason we go to school for.” (See 11, 19, and 20 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) There are other problems too numerous to mention specifically, but they include shifts in point of view, faulty pronoun agreement and reference, missing apostrophes, misspellings, and incorrect capitalization. (See 13a, 22, 23, 36, 43, and 45 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) Finally, the essay exceeds the 600-word limit. Score = 2.

Comments on Essay 3

The thesis is clearly stated and the language and style are appropriate. The focus is clear, and all the examples work to prove the main point that attention needs to be

placed on academics so that all students will get a good education. The essay is developed with case studies: two examples of successful students who combined sports and academics and another example of a student who was ultimately unsuccessful because she emphasized cheerleading over her studies. Transitional devices such as “Another student” and “On the other hand” direct the reader through the argument. The conclusion reiterates the main ideas and is enhanced with wording adapted from the Bible. The essay communicates a thorough understanding of the No Pass, No Play rule and its effects. Sentences are varied, interesting, and correct. Score = 4.

Comments on Essay 4

The thesis is clearly stated, and the writer has taken a stand. The style and language, however, show lapses into extremely colloquial expressions unsuitable for the writing test. In writing to another student, expressions such as “Yup, that’s it,” “lose it,” “get entertained like there’s no tomorrow,” and “I don’t give a damn” might be perfectly acceptable. However, because the TASP® essay is to be written for an instructor, not for someone the writer knows, such expressions are not appropriate. Nonetheless, the essay is fairly well focused, developed, and organized, and it contains an effective introduction and conclusion. It is fairly successful at making the point that “education is much more important” than extracurricular activities. It is not immediately clear, however, that paragraphs 3 and 4 are intended to be ironic, and at first they may seem to contradict the thesis.

Errors in sentence structure are fairly minor, and word choice, other than the expressions discussed previously, is good. The fifth sentence of paragraph 2 shows problems with parallel structure. (See 9 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) The last two sentences in paragraph 2 should be revised because *team* is singular: “No team will go on to any competition on its own. It goes to represent the school.” (See 22 in *The Bedford Handbook*.) Several words are spelled incorrectly: *recieve* and *recieving*, *privlege*, and *Unfortunatly*. This essay presents a problem in scoring. Some might give it a 2 because it neglects one of the important rhetorical considerations: appropriateness to the audience. Others might decide that the essay should earn a 3 because it communicates an idea well and presents a clear argument. Score = 2 or 3. (If this essay were to receive a combined score of 5, the objective test would be taken into account to determine whether this student would pass or fail the writing test.)