

The purpose of these practice test materials is to orient teachers and students to the types of passages and prompts on FSA tests. Each spring, students in grades 4–10 are administered one text-based writing prompt for the FSA English Language Arts test. Students will respond to either an informative/explanatory prompt or to an opinion/argumentation prompt. An example of a text-based writing prompt for each grade is available for practice. To familiarize students with the response formats, teachers may encourage students to practice with each type of prompt within a grade band.

The following FSA ELA Writing Practice Tests are available on the FSA portal as shown below:

Elementary Grade Band

Grade 4 - Informative/Explanatory

Grade 5 - Opinion

Middle Grade Band

Grade 6 - Informative/Explanatory

Grade 7 - Argumentation

Grade 8 - Informative/Explanatory

High School Grade Band

Grade 9 - Argumentation

Grade 10 - Informative/Explanatory

The practice test is not intended to guide classroom instruction.

To offer students a variety of texts on the FSA ELA Writing tests, authentic and copyrighted stories, poems, and articles appear as they were originally published, as requested by the publisher and/or author. While these real-world examples do not always adhere to strict style conventions and/or grammar rules, inconsistencies among passages should not detract from students' ability to understand and answer questions about the texts.

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Read the “Should Elementary School Students Switch Classes?” passage set.

Should Elementary School Students Switch Classes?

Source 1: Difficult Decisions for Schools

by Lillian James

- 1 If your school is like most elementary schools, you stay with the same teacher to learn subjects like math, reading, science, and social studies. You might switch classes for gym, music, or art. But when you get to middle school, you’ll likely have a different teacher for each subject. Some people wonder whether students should switch classes earlier than in middle school.
- 2 Schools all over the country are changing to this model to see whether it improves student learning. Some schools are happy with the new system. Kathleen Marchetti is a fifth-grade teacher at a school in Salem, Massachusetts. She feels that switching classes allows her the time to be more creative than she could when she taught all subjects. Marchetti also points out there are some difficult parts of switching classes—for example, having more students than she did before.
- 3 Other schools have had less success with switching classes. The teachers don’t have enough extra time to plan together. They prefer a single classroom where they can plan at their own pace.
- 4 Brian Roberts is the assistant principal at Liberty Elementary School in Azle, Texas. He notes that parents have had mixed reactions. Some parents love how their children are learning more about each subject from teachers who are experts in that subject. Other parents find it hard to communicate with teachers. They feel it is easier to talk to one teacher who teaches their child all day, rather than try to talk with many teachers.
- 5 While switching classes at a young age can work for some kids, parents, and teachers, others will continue to find it hard. Schools will have to weigh the benefits and the drawbacks of each model to figure out what is best for their students.

“Difficult Decisions for Schools” by Lillian James. Written for educational purposes.

Source 2: Deeper Learning Through Specialization

by Leon Samuels

6 Nearly every high school in the country has different departments for each subject. The math teacher has a math background. The science teacher has a deep understanding of earth science or physics. These teachers get to teach what they know and take pride in knowing it well.

7 If this is good for high school students, it would help younger students as well. Younger children should move between different classes during the day so that they can learn more from teachers who are masters of their subject matter.

8 Some schools have already started switching classes in elementary school. Education consultant Steve Peha has seen the percent of his schools that switch classes increase from 5% to 20% in the past 15 years.

9 When a teacher teaches the same lesson throughout the day, he or she can ensure that students fully understand the material. The lesson may be of higher quality since the teacher only has to prepare one outstanding lesson to teach several times each day.

10 Teachers can take classes to deepen their knowledge of their subjects. Susana Cordova, the chief academic officer of elementary schools in Denver, Colorado, elementary schools, has seen increased interest in teacher training in single subject areas. According to Cordova, teachers feel that they learn more quickly when they only teach one subject area.

11 Ian Yale is the principal at Columbia Elementary School in Burbank, Washington. He says that even though he pays more for teacher training, he saves on school materials. Yale points out that he needed 90 books when each teacher taught math. But when one teacher teaches math to 30 students at a time, he only needs 30 books that can be used over and over again.

12 Students, teachers, and school leaders can all benefit from switching classes. With careful planning and good communication, students learn the most when they switch classes, even in elementary school.

"Deeper Learning Through Specialization" by Leon Samuels. Written for educational purposes.

Source 3: One Student, One Teacher

by Lucille Ruby

- 13 Young children need guidance, support, and stability. According to Donna Snyder, a professional development expert, this is provided by children’s classroom teachers. By staying in one classroom with one teacher for the whole day, the youngest students can bond with their teachers. This connection with their teacher gives the young student confidence and creates a safe environment for learning.
- 14 Some schools are starting to consider having young students switch classes during the day. Seeing a different teacher for each subject may mean less work for the teacher. The teacher only teaches one lesson over and over each day, rather than planning a full day of lessons. Students, however, do not get to bond with teachers when they are only with each teacher for a short time each day.
- 15 A lot of time is lost when a child changes classes during the day as well. Students lose teaching time when they switch classrooms. Principal Kim Doepker of Blue Ridge Elementary in Walla Walla, Washington, notes that many young students have a hard time with transitions. Spending more time each day moving from room to room will make it harder for these students to learn.
- 16 Teachers also lose some freedom in their schedules. Teachers in multi-subject classrooms can extend a lesson as needed when they do not need to stick to a strict schedule. The teacher can also make more connections across subject areas when teaching. For example, the students may be learning about ancient Greece during social studies. They could then read stories about ancient Greece during reading, or study ancient Greek water systems during science.
- 17 Students need to switch classes in high school. These students need to learn from experts and focus on deeper learning in each subject as they prepare for college and careers. Young students need more of a bond with their teachers to develop a love of learning. While switching classes works well for older students, it does not meet the needs of the youngest learners.

“One Student, One Teacher” by Lucille Ruby. Written for educational purposes.

Writing Prompt

Write an article for the school newspaper in which you give your opinion about whether students in your school should switch classes for different subjects. Use information from the passages in your article.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to include

- an introduction;
- support for your opinion using information from the passages; and
- a conclusion that is related to your opinion.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.

A large rectangular area containing 25 horizontal lines, intended for writing or drawing.

Lined writing area with 25 horizontal lines.

A large rectangular area with horizontal ruling lines, resembling a blank sheet of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the rectangle. The entire area is enclosed within a thin black border.

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