

# CHSPE Writing Task Rubrics

The California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE) consists of two test sections: **English Language Arts (ELA)** and **Mathematics**. The ELA section consists of two subtests: **Language** and **Reading**.

The Language subtest of the ELA section includes one expository writing task. For the writing task an expository essay is written, which will be scored on both writing proficiency and ability to address the subject. Specific and detailed reasons need to be provided as support for your opinion.

## Writing Task Rubric

**Score: 5** The essay addresses the writing task in an effective manner and:

- clearly supports a central idea with appropriate reasoning and specificity; is purposefully organized.
- demonstrates control of a variety of sentence structures; uses precise word choice.
- is generally free of errors in grammar, usage, and conventions.

**Score: 4** The essay addresses the writing task in a competent manner and:

- supports a central idea with adequate reasoning and specificity; is organized.
- demonstrates control of sentence structure; uses generally appropriate word choice.
- may have minor errors in grammar, usage, and conventions.

**Score: 3** The essay addresses the writing task in a basic manner and:

- supports a central idea with reasons and details; has some organization.
- demonstrates basic control of sentence structure and word choice.
- may have errors in grammar, usage and conventions, but errors do not cause confusion.

**Score: 2** The essay addresses the writing task in a limited manner and:

- may not have a clear central idea; may provide limited or irrelevant details; may be poorly organized.
- may exhibit inadequate control of sentence structure and word choice.
- may have serious or repeated errors in grammar, usage, and conventions that may cause confusion.

**Score: 1** The essay may or may not address the writing task and:

- may have no central idea; provides few if any reasons or details.
- may exhibit little or no control of sentence structure.
- may have pervasive errors in grammar, usage and/or conventions that cause significant confusion.

## Sample Essays

Two sample essays are provided in response to the following prompt:

***High school classes should not begin before 9:00 a.m. Do you agree or disagree?***

***Write an essay clearly explaining your opinion.***

***Provide specific and detailed reasons as support for your opinion.***

The first is an example of an essay at score point two; the second is an example of an essay at score point four. Each sample essay is followed by commentary which explains why the essay earned the score that it did.

### Score Point Two

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The following essay earned a score of 2. The essay addresses the writing task in a limited manner. Please note that with a writing score of 2, an examinee cannot pass the Language subtest.

#### Sample Essay

I do not believe that school classes should start before 9:00 am, I agree strongly that they should start afterwards. I agree with this statement for multiple reasons, reasons like that most kids do not like to wake up that early unless we are forced so then we are still sleepy and our minds do not work fully. More reasons are that if school could start after 9:00 a.m. more students would come to first and second period instead of sleeping in. If school were to start at a later time, students would be real happy and more awake and maybe try harder on work and in classes. It's a known fact that teenagers think better in the afternoon and night than early mornings just that fact alone should be enough to make schools begin no earlier than 9:00 am.

#### Commentary:

This essay is a limited response to the writing task. The writer does take a position; however, the support for that position is limited. The writer offers four general reasons: students don't like to get up early, more students would come to first and second period instead of sleeping in, starting later would make students happy so they would try harder, and teenagers think better later in the day. The writer fails to extend or support those reasons with any specific details.

The writer could have improved the essay by incorporating specific examples such as the effects of changing starting times on extracurricular activities, observations of student behavior in early morning classes, citing specific studies or data, or using specific personal experiences rather than general statements ("most kids do not like to wake up that early..."). A short series of sentences in general support of a simplistic central idea does not demonstrate competence in writing an organized expository essay.

In the few sentences of this essay, the writer also exhibits inadequate control of sentence structure by incorrectly joining two sentences with a comma ("I do not believe that school classes should start before 9:00 am, I agree strongly...") followed by a run-on sentence. The last sentence is a run-on sentence as well. This essay is scored a 2 because it offers a limited response with inadequate sentence control.

## Score Point Four

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The following essay earned a score of four because the essay addresses the writing task in a competent manner.

### Sample Essay

What time school should start is a topic debated by many. Some people would like school to start later and some want it to stay the same as it is now. There are many advantages and disadvantages to starting school at 9:00 am, but I believe school should start at an earlier time.

An advantage to starting school later is that, students would have more time to sleep. They could also do homework at night and if they did not finish it the night before they could wake up an hour earlier and finish it. Many studies have been done that show that when teens start school later they learn more. That would seem to be a good reason to start schools later so that students can become smarter and do something in life.

A main disadvantage to starting later would be getting out of school later. The students then would only have a couple of hours of sunlight to go outside. Students would also have to stay up later doing homework. If students participated in sports they would be playing at night and getting home late. They would do their homework and go to bed around midnight. A later start would mean students would just stay up later at night. Students that had jobs would also be effected by a late start. They would only be able to work few hours as they would be getting out of school later in the day.

The advantages for staying with the early start time is students get out of school earlier. They have time to go somewhere with their friends and relax, before going home and doing homework. Students who work or play sports have plenty of time to do both of those things. One disadvantage of an early start is that many students may not pay attention in class because they are tired or come to school late because they wake up late or had to finish a project for a class. However, these are situations that a student can fix by going to bed earlier

To me when you look at the advantages and disadvantages, starting school at an early time is better. I would not like getting out of school at 4:30 or later. To me going to school and getting out early is better. You have time to go somewhere with your friends before going home and doing homework. I like to go and get school over fast. I hope officials do not change the time to start school to 9:00 am.

## Commentary:

The writer clearly establishes a position in the first paragraph (“I believe school should start at an earlier time”) and structures the essay to make it easy for the reader to follow the argument. The essay discusses advantages of late starts in the second paragraph, disadvantages in the third, and both advantages and disadvantages of early starts in the fourth paragraph. The writer concludes by restating support of the early start and reiterating reasons for that position.

A score point 4 essay supports its central idea with an adequate degree of specificity. In the second paragraph when explaining the advantages of starting later, the writer states that students could begin homework assignments at night and then finish them in the morning before school. The writer also states that teens learn more when they start later. Similarly, in the fourth paragraph, disadvantages of the later start are discussed, such as problems with playing sports into the nighttime or being unable to work as many hours in jobs. Although the examples support the central idea, they lack the specificity and elaboration needed for a higher scoring essay.

The writer demonstrates competent control of sentence structure and word choice—although there are a few awkward phrases (“To me when you look at the advantages and disadvantages, starting school at an early time is better”), they do not confuse meaning. The sentences are clearly written, but do not exhibit the complexity or variety of structures one would find in a higher scoring paper. Word choice is generally appropriate but lacks precision. The essay has a few minor errors in grammar and usage (some errors in comma placement, usage, and sentence boundaries), but again they do not cause confusion.

Although this essay is not error-free and does not exhibit a sophisticated writing style, the writer clearly demonstrates proficiency in writing a competent expository essay.