

2022 MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide

Grade 10 English Language Arts

Question 22: Essay

Reporting Categories: Language and Writing

Standard: L.PK-12.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Standard: L.PK-12.2 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Standard: L.PK-12.3 - Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Standard: W.PK-12.1 - Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Standard: W.PK-12.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Item Description: Write an argument in the form of a speech on a topic presented in two articles; use information from the articles to develop the argument.

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Essay Prompt

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea/thesis.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on “He Needs to Be a Kid” and “Committing to Play for a College,” write a speech to deliver at a school assembly that argues against the practice of early recruiting of young athletes. Be sure to include information from **both** articles to develop your speech.

Continue to the following page to see the scoring guides for this question. Sample student responses begin on page 3. The annotations that appear above each sample response describe elements of the response that contributed to its score for Idea Development and Standard English Conventions.

Scoring Guide for Idea Development

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is insightful and fully developed Skillful selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Skillful and/or subtle organization Rich expression of ideas Full awareness of the task and mode
5B	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is clear and well-developed Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Effective organization Clear expression of ideas Full awareness of the task and mode
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is general and moderately developed Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Moderate organization Adequate expression of ideas Sufficient awareness of the task and mode
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis may be present and is somewhat developed Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Limited organization Basic expression of ideas Partial awareness of the task and mode
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is not developed Insufficient evidence and/or details Minimal organization Poor expression of ideas Minimal awareness of the task and mode
0	The response shows evidence the student has read the text, but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

Scoring Guide for Standard English Conventions

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
3A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
3B	
3C	
3D	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
0	Sentences are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and/or insufficient length.

*In both Scoring Guides, letters are used to distinguish between sample student responses that earned the same score (e.g., 5A and 5B).

Idea Development—Score Point 5A

This fully developed speech presents a strong argument against early recruitment. Relevant details from both texts support insightful commentary. The introductory paragraph sets out a plan of development in noting that adolescence is difficult as is without adding unreasonable expectations caused by “hyperfocusing young athletes” on sports. The effect of unreasonable expectations is thoroughly addressed in the body paragraphs: “If a young athlete doesn’t live up to their expectations, they will be crushed” The possibility that vague promises from recruiters will create possible misguidance for adolescents is also discussed: “Committing to a college at such a young age just locks a child into expectations and a future they need to live up to, even though things could very well change. . . .” The writer notes the physical and psychological effects of early recruiting on children and adolescents. The fact that such pressures are “bad not only for their bodies, but for their minds” is supported with authoritative information from the texts and commentary that underscores the central idea: “A sport may become more of a job and less of a game for children.” The wider drawbacks of the system of early recruiting are developed in the third body paragraph: a system that “is continuously fueled by competition and a desire for profits” is argued to be destructive for institutions as well as children. The conclusion offers a clear summary of the points developed. Organization is skillful if somewhat formulaic as the introduction predicts development. Ideas are richly expressed, and full awareness of the task and mode is evident.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3A

The speech shows consistent control of a variety of sentence forms in sentences that build clear meaning: “The rigorous recruitment process shines a light on mental health in children, and serves as a reminder that children are young and have a lot to learn.” Control of grammar, usage, and mechanics is evident; minor spelling errors (“proffesional”) do not detract from the speech’s message.

Adolescence is often the hardest part of a person's life. Children often struggle with anxiety, and feel as though they are being watched even just by the other students in their school. Children often struggle with the pressure to perform in school, both socially and academically. The practice of early recruiting young athletes adds to the stress that young athletes already feel by creating expectations for them and by hyperfocusing young athletes on their sport. In addition, the process is negative for colleges as well, but it continues to be fueled by competition and a desire for profits.

Early recruiting of athletes creates a great expectation for them. Young kids are expected to grow up to be a great athlete, and often times it doesn't happen. If a young athlete doesn't live up to their expectations, they will be crushed. The allure of professional play also creates an expectation for young children to provide for their families and themselves. Children may work their whole lives in hopes of living up to the views of the people around them. In *He Needs to Be a Kid* Neiko says that he only wants to play basketball because “The NBA offers guaranteed money”. The idea of making money in a professional league could set an expectation for young players to make money and provide for their families, and could lead to players feeling like they let down their family if they do not reach these expectations. In addition, the recruitment process makes children decide on a life changing decision that will affect them years down the road. According to *Committing to Play for a College* a parent's young daughter, Kyla, would often “have these little breakdowns” over the stress of the recruitment process. Committing to a college at such a young age just locks a child into expectations and a future that they need to live up to, even though things could very well change in the years leading up to college.

The early recruiting of athletes also hyperfocuses young athletes on their sport. Many promising young athletes give up other sports and activities to pursue the vision of professionalism in their sport. This is bad not only for their bodies, but for their minds. According to *Committing to Play for a College*, "A growing body of academic studies has suggested that this sort of specialization can take a toll on young bodies, leading to higher rates of injury." A hyperfixation on a sport can also damage a child's mind. A child may become so focused on a sport that it becomes one of the only major parts of their life. This could take away from school, friends, or other activities. In addition, if the sport does not create a future for the athlete, they may feel as though they have lost a major part of their life, and may not know where to turn. A hyperfixation on a sport for a young athlete may also take away from the fun that they feel when playing the game. A sport may become more of a job and less of a game for children, and their enjoyment in the game may decrease.

The process is also negative for colleges, but it is continuously fueled by competition and a desire for profits. According to *Committing to Play for a College*, Andon Dorrance, a prominent girls soccer coach for North Carolina says that the process is "killing all of us". He says that colleges are constantly making offers to players who do not pan out. *He Needs to Be a Kid* states that "It's impossible to project what a third-grader can do, or a sixth-grader, or even an 11th-grader." The recruitment process is difficult and bad for colleges, but they have to keep recruiting athletes or competing colleges will take them and other colleges may miss out on money and success that comes from the athlete.

Overall, the recruitment process is detrimental for the mental and physical health of children. The practice of recruiting young athletes contributes to the stress that they already feel by creating expectations for them and by hyperfocusing young athletes on their sport. In addition, the process is negative for colleges as well, but it continues to be fueled by competition and a desire for profits. The rigorous recruitment process shines a light on mental health in children, and serves as a reminder that children are young and have a lot to learn. Many children struggle with mental health, and putting heavy pressure on children can cause or contribute to these problems.

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Idea Development—Score Point 5B

This fully developed speech is distinguished by a strong argumentative tone. The writer is aware of an audience, addressing members of the school's athletic program, and this is clear in the introduction: "You see, I'm here to talk about college recruitment for sports. Not the recruitment of graduates or high schoolers, but those just barely out of middle school." The argument's accuracy and importance are underscored at the end of the introduction with "I'm going to prove it to you." The speech follows with text-based examples of the effects of early recruiting. The first body paragraph opens with a reference to the article just quoted, citing examples of early recruiting resulting in unrealized expectations for students and wasted resources for schools. The physical and psychological effects on students are addressed in the following paragraph with commentary based on the same article: "To have what should be a positive experience corrupted and made into a 'burden' is downright despicable. . . ." In the third body paragraph, the pressure experienced by one child athlete described in "He Needs to Be a Kid" is expanded through the writer's commentary on a destructive system: "one can imagine the pressures children at the same age as Neiko and even younger must face, and the [potential] escalation of recruitment in the future." The conclusion maintains the argument, again in direct address, and reiterates the reasons against early recruiting: "After listening to what I have to say, I hope you can reflect on the monetary downsides, mental and physical detriments, and overwhelming stress early recruitment places on both colleges and young children." Organization of the speech presents details from both articles that coherently support a strong argument with relevant commentary. The writing demonstrates full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3B

Consistent control of standard English conventions supports fluency and an uninterrupted argument through correct and varied sentence forms: "While colleges do in fact face a negative impact regarding early recruitment, the real victims are the student athletes who must endure the process"; "Without a doubt, the pressure to succeed in sports and to make essential decisions at such a young age results in a build up of stress that is unhealthy for any individual, let alone a still developing child." Control of grammar, usage, and mechanics is evident as well.

Looking out over this bright crowd of young students, I can recognize many from the school's athletics program. You see, I'm here to talk about college recruitment for sports. Not the recruitment of graduates or high schoolers, but those just barely out of middle school. It may seem insane, but there is in fact a booming market of coaches looking to recruit players that haven't even stepped foot in high school. To quote from the article *Committing to Play for a College, Then Starting 9th Grade* by Nathaniel Popper, "students are offered full scholarships before they have taken their first College Boards, or even the Preliminary SAT exams." While you may not see the significance of such a fact, I assure you that this early recruitment has devastating effects on the children involved and the colleges perpetuating it, and I'm going to prove it to you.

To return to the article just mentioned, Popper quotes famed coach Anson Dorrance and his experiences with early recruitment by saying, "it's killing the kids that go places and don't play...it's killing the schools that have all the scholarships tied up in kids who can't play at their level. It's just, well, it's actually rather destructive." As evidenced by Mr. Dorrance, the practice of early recruitment simply isn't sustainable for either party. The National Collegiate Scouting Association reports the number of early college commitments as up to "36 percent in women's lacrosse and 24 percent in women's soccer" (Popper). This increase--primarily in women's sports--is leading to an influx of scholarship offers and a doubling of pressure on young girls to make lifelong decisions at such a young age, only for those plans to fall through as the years go on. Once again, to

reference Mr. Dorrance's anecdotal experiences, "he is increasingly making early offers to players who do not pan out years later...the result has been a growing number of girls who come to play for him at North Carolina and end up sitting on the bench" (Popper). Conclusively, the negative impact of early recruitment on colleges is how their overzealous admission leads to dead ends and money draining scholarships.

While colleges do in fact face a negative impact regarding early recruitment, the real victims are the student athletes who must endure the process. Firstly, Popper speaks of the physical detriments of recruitment by writing, "many players said they had given up all other recreational sports in middle school to play soccer year round...this sort of specialization can take a toll on young bodies, leading to higher rates of injury." As if that weren't enough, he elaborates on "the psychological pressure falling on adolescents, who are often ill equipped to determine what they will want to study in college, and where" (Popper). Without a doubt, the pressure to succeed in sports and to make essential decisions at such a young age results in a build up of stress that is unhealthy for any individual, let alone a still developing child. A victim of such circumstances, a freshman athlete named Kyla, reports how she "would have these little breakdowns" (Popper) over college decisions and that upon making her decision "it was as if a burden had been lifted from her" (Popper). To have what should be a positive experience corrupted and made into a "burden" is downright despicable, and to hear of the negative mental and physical effects early recruitment has on young children should be more than enough to convince you to avoid the process entirely.

However, there is another demon we have yet to conquer. *He Needs to Be a Kid* by Jesse Dougherty is based on the experiences of a young boy who is regarded by the basketball industry as an up and coming superstar. Neiko Primus, the boy in question, has faced all the pressures I've just listed and then some at the tender age of nine. Coast 2 Coast founder Deron Breeze, whose company ranked Neiko Primus as number one in the country, goes on to speak about the age of the rankings and how "middle school is not enough for some people, so they are going a little bit further...Whether you want or not...people are going to be shooting for you" (Dougherty). With this being said, one can imagine the pressures children at the same age as Neiko and even younger must face, and the potential escalation of recruitment in the future now that avenues like this are beginning to open up.

After listening to what I have to say, I hope you can reflect on the monetary downsides, mental and physical detriments, and overwhelming stress early recruitment places on both colleges and young children. And with that in mind, I pray we can all move forward in eradicating the practice of early recruiting of young athletes.

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Idea Development—Score Point 4

This well-developed speech maintains a straightforward but appropriately argumentative tone. The introduction states the central idea that early recruiting has “detrimental effects on not only the young athletes, but their parents and coaches as well.” The first body paragraph addresses the idea that early recruiting causes sports to “become less about having fun, and more about getting noticed.” The following paragraph addresses the stresses on parents as their children seem to be forced into early maturity (“they don’t want their kids to be overwhelmed or . . . grow up too fast”), and as they face “the expenses of keeping up with the sport.” The effect on coaches is noted, though briefly, in the third body paragraph, which also points out that if “players are often confined to the bench” because they were rushed into competitive sports before their skills were fully developed, all parties suffer. The conclusion is brief but to the point, reiterating “This is [necessary] for youth sports to remain as something fun that doesn’t make children grow up any faster than they need to.” The writer chooses relevant details from both texts and expands on them in the commentary. Ideas are clear. Organization is somewhat formulaic as main ideas are separated by paragraphs that maintain a still-coherent flow of ideas. The writing demonstrates full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3C

Consistent control of standard English conventions is seen in correct and varied sentence forms, with only minor errors in usage: “The parents of young athletes are also forced to make big decisions regarding their children’s athleticism. Many can feel conflicted as to whether or not they should let their children . . . except offers they get.” The speech’s text is sufficiently complex to demonstrate control of conventions.

Early recruiting can have detrimental effects on not only the young athletes, but their parents and coaches as well. This practice can put too much pressure on young kids' shoulders, cause conflicted feelings in parents about what is best for their child, and make it harder for coaches to find good players.

The reason most young children get into sports is because its something fun and enjoyable for them to do. But, with the increased practice of early recruiting, these sports become less about having fun, and more about getting noticed. Being noticed by a recruiter at a young age can create pressures that young children should not have to deal with. People in the eighth and ninth grades are being asked to make commitments as big as what college they want to go to. Conferring with colleges and coaches can be time consuming, and stressful, (36 Popper). While a child may know what they want in the moment, it's difficult to know what they will want in three or four years. The professionalization of youth sports has turned after-school activities into something that alters children's futures, (7 Popper).

The parents of young athletes are also forced to make big decisions regarding their children's athleticism. Many can feel conflicted as to whether or not they should let their children participate in early recruiting, or except offers they get. On the one hand, they want their children to be successful, and ensure that they have a bright future, but on the other hand, they don't want their kids to be overwhelmed or make them grow up too fast. The stresses of having to make big decisions or having to get noticed can be a lot for a young kid, and for parents, especially if their child is getting college offers when they aren't even through middle school. The expenses of keeping up with the sport can also be a lot for parents. Being noticed by a college can mean that a child has to play more frequently, some even dropping other sports and activities to play one all year round. All most parents want is to make their child happy, and keep them safe, and early recruiting can make this difficult, with parents having to shield their children from those who want to profit off of them (43 Dougherty).

Early recruiting can also make things harder for coaches. The practice makes it so that if you don't find talent early, there's hardly any left when the official time for recruiting comes along. This forces more coaches to recruit early, creating a vicious cycle. There's also the fact that some kids who are recruited early aren't able to play at the level they need to be at when the time comes. Sometimes players who are given offers do not pan out as much as is needed years later (24 Dougherty). This is hard for coaches and for players, as those players are often confined to the bench.

Overall, the practice of early recruiting is wrong for young athletes, parents, and coaches, and should be stopped. This is necessary for youth sports to remain as something fun that doesn't make children grow up any faster than they need to.

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Idea Development—Score Point 3

This speech is moderately developed, with a clear argumentative tone supported by direct address of the audience. The opening, “Good morning, students,” leads to an explanation of the importance of the topic: “young athletes who have been put through severe psychological and physical distress via the practice of early recruiting for sports.” Each article is addressed in a different body paragraph, causing some interruption of fluency, but general information and selected quotes build an adequate view of the negative effects of early recruiting. Neiko Primus and Haley Berg are shown to be victims of the same system, with the writer arguing that Neiko’s story is “relatable for other young athletes, too.” The concluding paragraph adds insightful commentary: “I urge all of you to never give up your immense passion and childhood for the chance to grow up faster.” Overall, ideas are expressed adequately. Details are only moderately developed, but organization is still moderately effective.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3D

The speech is sufficiently complex to show consistent control of standard English conventions. Sentence forms are varied and mostly correct, though some awkwardness in word choice is noticeable: “There seems to be a race to recruit athletes that have an increased talent for the sport, which proves itself to be very detrimental on these children.” Scattered errors in capitalization and spelling do not interfere with communication.

"Good morning, students. Today, I am here to speak on behalf of all young athletes who have been put through severe psychological and physical distress via the practice of early recruiting for sports. This process takes children that were once able to find passion in a sport and forces them to grow up and worry about their future at such a young age.

I want to take a moment to describe this process through a young boy named Neiko Primus. Neiko was only 9 years old when college recruiters began scouting him out and putting an immense amount of pressure and expectations on him to further his basketball career. Neiko's mother, Michelle Munday, expressed her concerns for these great expectations placed on her son by saying that "He needs to be a kid. He needs to just be Neiko...Youth basketball is crazy and puts so much pressure on these kids at such a young age. I am doing my best to protect him from all that." Neiko's story is relatable for other young athletes, too.

the recruiting process is incredibly competitive, which is why some parents and athletes are conflicted while choosing between passion and love for a sport and taking it more seriously and losing the element of fun. A teenage girl named Haley Berg began receiving offers from colleges for getting recruited for soccer at the young age of fourteen. There seems to be a race to recruit athletes that have an increased talent for the sport, which proves itself to be very detrimental on these children. This child began having conversations with college coaches every night in eighth grade. one coach expressed his thoughts about this recruiting process by saying that "It's killing all of us".

As we can see, students, this process of early recruiting is messy, harmful, and terrifying. It throws the opportunity of giving up love for a sport in order to grow up quickly and be competitive at a young age. Why would anyone want that? I urge all of you to never give up your immense passion and childhood for the chance to grow up faster. Hopefully, learning about the experiences of these young children have taught you about the harmfulness of early recruiting for young children."

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Idea Development—Score Point 2

The response is somewhat developed. Some awareness of the task and mode is seen in examples of direct address, primarily in the opening and conclusion. However, the argument is weak. The writer presents information from both articles, yet development is limited by paraphrased ideas and little commentary. The writing is sensible, but the use of basic transitions between paragraphs shows only limited organization.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 2

Although there are few actual errors in mechanics, the response is too brief to demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions. Sentence forms show some variety, but usage errors and awkwardness stand out in such a brief response: “Most students in middle school are unsure what they want to major in and what college to go to but with this recruitment of such young athletes, it is affecting them mentally.”

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sports are very entertaining to watch and play, however, we must not focus on recruiting young athletes who are still attending elementary school and middle school. There are many reasons not to recruit these young players. First, "It's impossible to project what a third-grader can do, or a sixth-grader, or even an 11th-grader. It gets harder and harder as you go down in ages" (Dougherty paragraph 22). We all want our college teams and professional teams to succeed, right?

Most students in middle school are unsure what they want to major in and what college to go to but with this recruitment of such young athletes, it is affecting them mentally. Contacting these student athletes every week can also affect them as we can see with Kyla. "Throughout the year, Kyla said, she "would have these little breakdowns" (Popper paragraph 36). This recruitment is inflicting pain on those who play sports.

We must end this practice of recruiting young athletes because it is affecting them physically and mentally. With this being said, go watch some sports and go recruit high school aged students.

Thank you

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Idea Development—Score Point 1

This minimal response has a central idea, but development is limited to just a few statements on the negative consequences of early recruiting. The response is characterized by a poor expression of ideas, as evidenced by the opening sentence, which represents most of the writing. There is very little, if any, awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 1

The response consists of only two sentences, but some sense can be made of the writing. There is little control of sentence formation, grammar, usage, or mechanics.

With early recruiting this can cause many things to a person like issues with health, or injuries and with this, and it could also impact grades of a kid if they're more focused on the sports which could mean they are held back in school. This also can cause psychological pressure on adolescents who aren't equipped to figure out what to study in collage.

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Idea Development—Score Point 0

This is an incorrect response to the prompt. The statement about school sports is sufficient evidence that the student read the articles.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 0

Sentences are seriously flawed and there is no evidence of control of grammar, usage, or mechanics.

having early practice can be chalining for most of the young students and its important that the students have eat beforer the practice and that can be a challenge for most of the kid. So its better if the practice can be later on the day wjen the students have already have and they have energy.

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