

2026 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 essay arguing the benefits of specific programs based on two articles on similar topics; use evidence from both articles to develop the essay.

This item can be found in the released item sets on the [MCAS Resource Center](#).

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 from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on “What We’re Missing Out On” and “Fostering Connections Between Young and Old,” write an essay arguing that programs that connect people of different generations can benefit both individuals **and** society. Use evidence from **both** articles to develop your essay.

Continue to the following page to see the scoring guides for this question. Sample student responses begin on page 4. 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
<u>5A</u> <u>5B</u>	• 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
<u>4</u>	• 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
<u>3</u>	• 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
<u>2</u>	• 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
<u>1</u>	• Central idea/thesis is not developed • Insufficient evidence and/or details • Minimal organization • Poor expression of ideas • Minimal awareness of the task and mode
<u>0</u>	• 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 3B 3C 3D	• 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
2	• 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	• 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 5A

The fully developed essay introduces the idea that intergenerational programs can benefit both individuals and society and effectively argues this claim by using well-chosen details from both articles. The organization is skillful, highlighting in one body paragraph how “these intergenerational relationships are benefi[c]ial to individuals” and explaining in the other that “society as a whole can gain plenty from these programs.” At times, the transitions are somewhat formulaic, and the argument is a bit unbalanced between the two body paragraphs; however, there is a rich expression of ideas and sophisticated weaving of details from both articles: “Young and older people have different types of intelligence, which combined can create an efficient way of solving problems and improving society, as ‘neither type of intelligence alone is enough to build movements that shift the status quo.’” The essay demonstrates a full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3A

The essay shows consistent control of varied sentence forms, grammar, usage, and mechanics: “Not only did this take a toll on the well-being of older generations, but it restricted and held the younger generations from important or exclusive knowledge.” Minor errors, such as missing commas and some misspellings, do not impede meaning nor detract from the overall quality of the writing, and the essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions relative to its length and complexity.

As time continues to pass, social relationships between two members of different generations have become increasingly rare. However, there are numerous benefits of having these intergenerational relationships. In "What We're Missing Out On" and "Fostering Connections Between Young and Old," it becomes clear that relationships between two members of different generations are not only beneficial to these individuals, but to society as well, due to the mutual benefits and combination of perspectives.

Primarily, it is apparent that these intergenerational relationships are beneficial to individuals due to numerous studies and statistics. A key benefit of intergenerational relationships is the mutual happiness created as a result. A study conducted by Harvard concluded that adults who had connections with and invested in members of the younger generations were three times more likely to be happy in the later stages of their lives. This is a result of their "more alive, more alert and more optimistic" views about the future (Newberry 15). As these older generations get to instill their wisdom into the younger generations, they have more optimism and feel satisfaction that they are able to contribute to the younger generations. Older generations have fallen victim to stereotypes associated with aging over the past century, and have therefore been secluded from society. When older citizens are excluded from activities solely due to their age, they become more likely to become "stressed, depressed or suffer chronic illness" (Newberry 10). These severe health problems are a result of social isolation, but take a legitimate toll on the health of these older adults. Without interaction with younger generations, these older people will remain depressed, as their sense of disconnection grows. However, programs are being created in order to fight back against these struggles. Through this reconnection with the youth, older people are no longer suffering from the same feelings of loneliness and being purposeless. This is further proven through the results of a program conducted with Ohio State University. By the end of this program, it was revealed that of the seniors who participated in this program, "97 percent indicated it allowed them to feel happy, interested, loved, younger, and needed" (Halpert 7). This is another result of being able to socialize and learn with those with different experiences. These older people have often been excluded from socializing, which leads to loneliness and boredom. Due to these programs, they have been allowed to begin socializing again, this time with people with different experience and perspectives. Corresponding with this, the younger generations do get a benefit from the relationships with older generations. When younger people are disconnected with older people they "don't get a sense of what a whole life looks like in its varying chapters" (Newberry 17). Since these children and young adults have incorrect or uneducated perceptions on the lives of older people, they lack and miss out on key life skills to prepare themselves for their inevitable futures. Therefore, through the combat against loneliness in older generations and the education of the youth, programs that connect generations have staggering benefits for both.

Along with the benefits experienced by the individuals, there are also a number of benefits for society that can derive from the creation of these programs. Society as a whole can gain plenty from these programs, specifically one introduced to NYU and Washington University. In this program, these two universities will create opportunities for intergenerational interaction through shared housing. Not only do the individuals benefit from this, but it contributes to a larger societal problem. Not only do many seniors inhabiting cities suffer from social isolation, but all citizens experience the high housing prices. Shared housing provides a break for society, which allows for an easy way to eliminate the difficulty of obtaining a house in the expensive market for many. A general societal benefit of intergenerational interaction is the difference of perspectives. Young and older people have different types of intelligence, which combined can create an efficient way of solving problems and improving society, as "neither type of intelligence alone is enough to build movements that shift the status quo" (Newberry 20). Therefore, society can benefit from the exchange of ideas between generations, as their separate forms of intelligence compliment each other.

Conclusively, over the past century, social connection between generations has severely decreased, leading to harmful ideas such as ageism and segregation of generations. Not only did this take a toll on the well-being of older generations, but it restricted and held the younger generations from important or exclusive knowledge. Therefore the implementation of programs that encourage intergenerational interactions positively affect both the older and younger generations, as there are numerous benefits for both groups. Along with this, society benefits as a whole from these interactions, as compromising and advancements for social matters become more effective with separate perspectives.

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Idea Development 5B

The essay is skillfully organized and fully develops the argument that programs connecting people of different generations benefit both individuals and society by “[breaking] barriers of age-segregation and [creating] long-lasting intergenerational bonds.” Skillfully selected evidence paired with rich analysis supports the central idea: “with the implementation of programs, it can break the divide of generations and it can benefit both the community and the people.” Additional analysis highlights the lasting impact of these programs: “wisdom passed down from older generations will likely stick with younger generations until they grow old to pass down wisdom themselves.” There is some repetition of ideas, and explanations sometimes paraphrase rather than analyze the evidence selected. Overall, however, the essay demonstrates rich expression of ideas with full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3B

The essay presents a variety of sentence structures. Grammar and mechanics are generally accurate, though wording is occasionally awkward: “With the creation of programs bringing generations together, it can form long-lasting intergenerational bonds which benefit both individuals and society.” Despite these minor errors, overall grammar, usage, and mechanics are well maintained throughout the essay, demonstrating consistent control of standard English conventions.

In modern day, with the establishment of schools, work places, and nursery homes our communities have set them self up for an unseen divide between generations. This divide did not exist long ago in the 1900s, where age groups all worked together coincidentally, connecting generations and different people together. Recent times, there has been a need to reform these connections through programs, as studies have proven there are benefits which can positively affect our community as a whole. Programs that connect people of different generations can benefit both individuals and society because it breaks barriers of age-segregation and creates long-lasting intergenerational bonds.

By implementing programs which connect people of different generations with each other, it can break the barriers of age-segregation which is a prominent problem in the United States, as author Laura Newberry states, "One crushing consequence of this century-long trend is that older people are often disconnected from the rest of society, leading to isolation and ageism." (Newberry). With age-segregation, the impact can negatively affect older audiences can bring implications of bad mental health affects. Despite this, with the implementation of programs, it can break the divide of generations and it can benefit both the community and the people. With older and younger generations interacting with one another, research has found that "those with positive perceptions of aging live almost a decade longer, on average." (Newberry), as this quote states, younger audiences which interact with older audiences have better perceptions on age, which in return, results in longer life spans. Longer life spans can overall contribute positively to society, giving communities a better image and paves way for more experiences to be taught by older generations and learned by younger generations. Breaking age-segregation is not only good for society, but good for individuals themselves as well, as author Julie Halpert says, "Children involved in the programs demonstrated higher levels of empathy and a greater ability to regulate their behavior than those who hadn't participated in such programs." (Halpert). These programs created to break ageism and age-segregation have a positive benefit on individuals themselves, not only improving the mental health of senior citizens, as said by Newberry, but also creating more empathy and behavior regulation in children.

With the creation of programs bringing generations together, it can form long-lasting intergenerational bonds which benefit both individuals and can also positively contribute to the environment. Creating bonds with other generations, can bring along the exchangement of knowledge with it, as Avery Forman wrote for Havard Business School, "When you are young, you have raw smarts; when you are old, you have wisdom. When you are young, you can generate lots of facts; when you are old you know what they mean and how to use them," (Newberry). Here, Forman emphasizes that with the formation of bonds between generations, both parties can positively benefit individually, exchanging information and first-hand experience that you do not learn every day in a class room. These bonds, and information gained from them will last very long, and wisdom passed down from older generations will likely stick with younger generations until they grow old to pass down wisdom themselves. In being a positive social environment, it can benefit society as a whole as well, as Dr. Annette Medina-Walpole, the chief of division of geriatrics and aging at the University of Rochester School of medicine & Dentistry states, "This is very much in line with what needs to be happening to engage our older adult community," (Halpert). By having a positive and engaged older community, society can be healthily benefitted by the contributions and the image they make.

To conclude, the benefits and positive implications of implementing programs which connect people of different generations together are overwhelming, as it breaks the barriers of age-segregation and creates long-lasting intergenerational bonds. Studies have proven that these benefits outweigh the negative, and putting these programs to work do not have any negative implications, so the need to implement these programs globally to positively improve both society and individuals is prominent.

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Idea Development 4

The well-developed essay effectively uses evidence and analysis to support the argument that intergenerational programs benefit both individuals and society. The organization is effective and highlights how intergenerational programs allow people to “share knowledge with each other,” “create new relationships and make new friends,” and “fight ageism and isolation.” Relevant details from the articles are presented and explained clearly to develop the first article’s argument: “When you are young, you have raw smarts; when you are old, you have wisdom.” Transitions are somewhat formulaic (“Another reason,” “Finally”), but ideas are expressed clearly, and overall, the essay demonstrates full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3C

The essay uses a variety of sentence structures and demonstrates consistent control of grammar and mechanics: “They allow older people who don’t get to see others often into the public, pairing them and allowing them to interact with younger generations.” Minor issues, including capitalization and punctuation errors, do not impede understanding, and the essay overall demonstrates control of standard English conventions.

Programs that connect people of various ages are beneficial to both individuals and society. Programs that create inter-generational relationships benefit people and our society by allowing both young people and older generations of people to teach new things and gain new knowledge, allowing older and younger people to create new relationships and friends, and can confront ageism and diminish age segregation barriers.

Programs that connect people of different ages can be beneficial by allowing people of younger generations and older generations to share knowledge with each other. Younger people and older people have various sets of knowledge that can only be shared by communicating with each other. By doing this, we can solve problems faster and have a different outlook on how we live our lives. Avery Forman, a writer for Harvard Business School, states, “When you are young, you have raw smarts; when you are old, you have wisdom. When you are young, you can generate lots of facts; when you are old, you know what they mean and how to use them” (Newberry paragraph 19). Communicating and problem solving with people of various ages has been proven to be more effective and generate better results.

Another reason why programs that allow people of various ages to connect can be effective, is to allow people to create new relationships and make new friends, as loneliness and depression is a real issue, especially on for people on the older end. A survey by Ohio State University found that there were many benefits, including reduced loneliness in older people, and more empathetic children. They stated, “Among adults who participated in such programs, 97 percent indicated it allowed them to feel happy ... Children involved in the programs demonstrated higher levels of empathy and a greater ability to regulate their behavior” (Halpert paragraph 7). People who participated in these programs made new friends, which is very good for our society, especially because people who are older have reported becoming more distant with younger generations throughout the years.

Finally, Programs that encourage inter-generational relationships our good for individuals and society is because it helps fight ageism and isolation. Older people are often discriminated against because of their inability to do everything a younger person can. However, they are still capable of doing many things. Despite this they are often depicted and thought of as helpless, uninformed, and frail. Ideas like these lead to ageism, which is very harmful for our society. San Francisco Village and other organizations are working hard to fix this issue. They allow older people who don’t get to see others often into the public, pairing them and allowing them to interact with younger generations. These give people a chance to make friends with older people, instead of feeling pity for them.

Overall, organizations and programs that allow people to form inter-generational relationships are very beneficial for individuals and society. They allow for the sharing of knowledge and the creation of new ideas, the creation of new relationships, and helps put an end to ageism.

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Idea Development 3

The essay demonstrates moderate idea development with an appropriate but general argument that programs connecting generations benefit individuals and society, with both older and younger generations “gaining closer/stronger relationships” and “growing as people.” Evidence is appropriate, though the explanations often restate rather than analyze the selected quotations: “These both show how creating new bonds can help you grow as a person and can help you learn new things.” Organization is moderate with formulaic transitions (“One example,” “Another example,” “Finally,”), and there is adequate expression of ideas. The essay demonstrates sufficient awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3D

The essay demonstrates consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Minor errors in spelling (“benifit”) and punctuation do not impede understanding, and the essay’s length and complexity are sufficient to demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions.

Programs that connect people of different generations can benifit both individuals and society in many ways for example, younger and older people feeling different after participating, gaining closer/stronger relationships with family members, and growing as people.

One example is when both articles talk about the difference it makes after creating bonds with older/younger people, “It’s the way people were meant to grow up and grow old in connection with each other,” (Halpert 4). “Sometimes you have to be open to trying something new, and push yourself out of your comfort zone to find these kinds of relationships,” (Newberry 25). These both show how creating new bonds can help you grow as a person and can help you learn new things.

Another example is when both articles talk about benefits that those types of bonds and relationships have for the elders. “The Harvard Study of Adult Development, which began tracking more than 700 men in 1938 and continues today, found that older adults who invested in younger generations were three times more likely to be happy in their 70s than those who did not,” (Newberry 15) “Among adults who participated in such programs, 97 percent indicated it allowed them to feel happy, interested, loved, younger and needed,” (Halpert 7). Both evidence show how adults are shown to be much happier when investing in younger generations and show the benefit for adults.

Finally, both articles talk about how thinking outside the box and getting involved can be good for the age groups, “I came here thinking I was going to teach them, but I really think they taught me,” (Halpert 17) “getting involved in activism and organizing can be a great way to form meaningful bonds with people of different ages,” (Newberry 24). Both evidence from the articles show how people getting involved can help form different perspectives for people like making them start a family like relationship between each other and gaining each others trust.

In conclusion programs that connect people of different generations can benifit both individuals and society in many ways, helping them gain good relationships, building bonds with family and helping both younger and older people feel happy.

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Idea Development 2

The essay presents a basic and somewhat repetitive argument that “connecting people of differ[e]nt generations can benefit both people in the process.” Selection of evidence is limited, with use of a single quotation from each article and explanations that largely restate the quotations rather than analyze them: “Young people and older people say that they would be happy to have a chance to work together proves that they would be benefitting each other in this.” Overall, the essay demonstrates basic expression of ideas and partial awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 2

There is considerable awkwardness and inconsistency in grammar and mechanics: “when talking young music students coming on their grounds and having pop- up concerts.” However, despite the essay’s short length and limited complexity, control of sentence structure is mostly maintained. Overall, the essay demonstrates mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to its length and complexity.

In the articles “What We’re Missing Out On” by Laura Newberry and “Fostering Connections Between Young and Old” by Julie Halpert connecting people of different generations can benefit both people in the process.

In “What We’re Missing Out On” by Laura Newberry younger and older people would work well together and would be good for both generations. When talking about a survey in 2022, it is said, “older and younger people are enthusiastic about the potential of working together to create social exchange” (Newberry paragraph 22). Young people and older people say that they would be happy to have a chance to work together proves that they would be benefitting each other in this.

In “Fostering Connections Between Young and Old” Julie Halpert having a social exchange and connecting between the old and young are benefitting both. when talking young music students coming on their grounds and having pop- up concerts. she mentions, “its delightful for me to sit down and have conversations about their careers and what they’re planning” (Halpert paragraph 10). Marilyn talking about how she likes being about to talk to young people about their goals and careers proves that connecting and talking between the young and the old is benefitting both generations.

Mariyn talking about how much she likes talking to younger kids about their goals and a survey saying that young people and old people would be happy to have a social exchange to talk to each other shows that it is benefitting both generations in society for them to learn more about each other and grow with.

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Idea Development 1

The brief response presents the idea that connecting different generations benefits both individuals and society, but it lacks sufficient evidence or explanation to develop the claim: “Which this can teach indivi[d]uals and the society to be more mature [and] better.” The response demonstrates minimal organization and poor expression of ideas. Overall, there is minimal awareness of task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 1

The response contains frequent errors in grammar and mechanics that impede understanding. Sentences are short and repetitive, with little variety or structural control: “Connecting different generations can benfit in individuals and society.” Given its limited length and complexity, the response demonstrates little control of standard English conventions.

Connecting different generations can benfit in individuals and society. In What We're Missing Out ON by Laura Newberry the author writes " When you ae young, you have raw smarts; when you are old, you have wisdom. When you are young you can generate lots of facts; when you ae old, you kow what they mean and how to use them". This quote can help people by giving them an idea on how old people think and how they have alot of experience. Which this can teach indiviuals and the society to be more mature nad better. Because there getting advice by people who had more experience in life more than them.

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Idea Development 0

The single brief statement (“they are both about the communication and friendship between diff[e]rent generations”) shows some indication that the student has read the articles but does not address the prompt.

Standard English Conventions 0

The single sentence contains errors in spelling and capitalization and does not demonstrate control of standard English conventions relative to the response’s minimal length.

they are both about the communication and friendship between diffrent generations.

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