Study at Home
ECCE Writing Resource Pack
May, 2020
How to Use this Guide

This resource pack is provided for both students preparing independently to take the ECCE and for teachers designing lessons to help their students improve their writing skills for ECCE. This document includes exercises and study questions to accompany a set of sample writing responses and commentary as well as a set of additional ECCE writing prompts. Both of those resources are included in the appendix at the end of the document.

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For STUDENTS

Here are some specific suggestions about how you can use this guide to help you improve your writing skills as you prepare for the ECCE.

- See general tips for independent practice (below).
- Become familiar with the task description and rating criteria on p. 4.
- Read the sample essay and letters and work through accompanying exercises, pp. 7-8.
- Work through the lesson/study plan to accompany practice prompts, pp. 9-10.
- Find a classmate or a friend to study with and share your writing samples. Giving and receiving feedback will help you improve your writing skills.

General Tips for Independent Practice

- The most important way to learn to write is by writing! It takes time and practice to become a good writer; there are no easy shortcuts.
- Use this resource pack to break down your writing practice into manageable steps.
- Clear and effective writing implies clear and logical thinking about your topic. Make sure you do not skip over the essential steps of pre-writing, including brainstorming, studying vocabulary, outlining, and organizing your thoughts.
- The editing and revision process is the key to improving your writing. Once you have a first draft, leave it for a day or more, then come back to it with fresh eyes. Look for errors, repetition, grammar and vocabulary mistakes, and a clear, logical flow of ideas with each paragraph.
- Pay special attention to memorized phrases or idioms. Correct use of idioms can make your writing stronger, but avoid using ‘cliches’ (idioms that are over-used) or the wrong idiom.
- In order to improve your writing, it is most helpful if you have someone who can read your essays and letters and provide feedback. This could be a teacher, tutor, classmate, or other peer. The more detailed feedback you receive, the better, but any feedback is helpful. Go back to your writing with fresh eyes after any feedback, and remember that your reader’s reaction is important. If something is not clear to a reader, it can usually be re-written to make it clearer.
For TEACHERS

- See general tips for teaching online (below).
- Review task description and rating criteria on p. 4.
- Review lesson plan template (pp. 5-6) and adapt as needed.
- Refer to specific example exercises for use with sample essays and letters (pp. 7-8).
- Refer to suggested lesson plan for use with new prompts (pp. 9-10) — adapt as needed for your time and available resources.

General Tips for Teaching Writing Online

Engage with the learners: give all students a chance to participate in some way (chat, audio, etc.), and invite students who haven’t spoken to participate.

Create a supportive atmosphere. Be patient with the use of technology.

Use screen-sharing to share documents with the entire class—for example to analyze sample essays and letters or workshop student draft paragraphs.

Use low-tech equipment (e.g., whiteboards) for variety.

Provide feedback—both in real time, and after students submit work—via email or other messaging platform.

Match students in small groups/pairs and encourage peer editing via email or video chat outside of designated class time.

Establish clear deadlines and communicate the agenda and expectations for each session ahead of time.
ECCE Writing Section

The ECCE Writing Section offers test takers a choice of writing a letter or an essay to express their opinion about a situation or issue introduced in a short newspaper article. The test taker reads a short excerpt from a newspaper article and then writes a letter or essay giving an opinion about a situation or issue. The test taker has 30 minutes to write the letter or essay. There is no word limit, but test takers are advised to write a page.

According to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), B2 level writers are able to:

• produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects;
• explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options;
• express themselves clearly and without much sign of having to restrict what they want to say;
• employ a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints and develop arguments, using some complex sentence forms to do so.

Writing Assessment Criteria

Content and Development

• Length and development
• Relevance
• Supporting details
• Reliance on prompt content

Organization and Connection of Ideas

• Smooth flow of ideas
• Cohesion and coherence
• Connection of ideas across paragraphs
• Paragraphing conventions

Linguistic Range and Control

• Accuracy
• Severity of errors
• Use of prompt-specific vocabulary
• Repetition of vocabulary

Communicative Effect

• Address the prompt
• Establish context
• Genre requirements
• Appropriate register
Writing Lesson Plan Template

This template is provided here to help teachers structure a set of lessons to teach writing for the ECCE.

The timing of each step in the lesson sequence will depend on many factors, but it is suggested to spread these steps out across at least 3 to 4 separate lessons.

Stage 1: Read and Analyze

Students need to read examples of appropriate model essays or letters and analyze them to help familiarize themselves with good writing. In addition to reading examples of good or model writing, students can also benefit from reading essays and letters that are acceptable but still need improvement.

Specific Elements to Analyze:

- Structure and characteristics of the relevant genre
- Vocabulary, idioms, and effective phraseology
- Sentence structure and paragraph structure
- Details of the argument or claims, and why it is (or isn’t) convincing
- Effective use of examples, rhetorical devices, and descriptive language

Stage 2: Pre-Writing

In the pre-writing stage, students consider a topic, organize their thoughts, activate their background knowledge, and take notes on relevant vocabulary.

Specific Steps:

- Brainstorm all ideas, concepts, examples, and words related to the topic.
- Form an opinion or decide on a perspective.
- Consider relevant personal experience, background information, or specific knowledge.
- Cluster ideas using a graphic representation (e.g., outline format, word web, spider map, 2- or 3-column chart/table).
- Evaluate reasoning. Is it logical? Is it convincing? Do the details support the claim? Are the examples memorable? Are the implications of the examples clear? Do you anticipate counter arguments?
Stage 3: Composing the First Draft

Specific Steps:

- Write an introduction.
- Use the outline, word web, etc., to order paragraphs.
- Draft each paragraph, making sure the examples and details support the main idea of each paragraph and making sure each paragraph has only one main idea. Refer to vocabulary notes.
- Write a concluding sentence or paragraph.

Stage 4: Editing and Revising

- Re-read both at the time of drafting and after a break, to come back with fresh eyes.
- Edit for grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and paragraph structure.
- Ask: is the point clear? Could the argument be stronger? Are there additional details that could be added?
- Encourage peer editing in early drafting stages.
- Formal feedback should be focused and always followed by opportunities to rewrite.
SPECIFIC EXERCISES and PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

STAGE 1 Practice: Read and Analyze Model Essays

A. General Questions to Accompany Sample Essays (see Appendix 1)

1. Find the thesis statement or main argument.
2. Write the supporting details/arguments.
3. Write down 3-4 transition phrases or signposting devices the writer uses. (Signposting devices: words and phrases that guide the reader through the essay, structure it, and help make transitions.)
4. List adjectives and other descriptive language the author uses to support their argument and convince the reader.
5. Write down the specific details or examples used.
6. Vocabulary and phraseology:
   a. List any vocabulary words that are new to you.
   b. List any words that you could think of a synonym for.
   c. What key phrases do you notice? Are these effective, or do they sound memorized?
   d. Is there any repetition that could be avoided?
7. Errors: Find and correct any errors, inconsistencies, or examples of sentences that could be improved.
8. Finally: Study the commentary provided and refer back to the essays.

B: Additional Specific Study Questions for Each Essay

Questions for Writing Sample #6:

1. Almost every sentence in this essay begins with a very common signpost. The paragraphs all begin in a very predictable way (First of all, On the other hand, and All in all). Stronger writers use more original language and vary the ways they connect ideas. Choose either paragraph 3 or paragraph 4, and rewrite it with a more original signpost.

2. Every part of an essay should work to support the writer’s main idea. This writer states the main idea/thesis in the second sentence of paragraph 1: studying abroad can cause difficulties (and is not the best choice for students).

   Now look at paragraph 2. Does the information there support this main idea?

   Try to write a new first sentence for paragraph 2 so that the paragraph will better support the main idea.
3. How many advantages to studying abroad are mentioned? How many disadvantages? Is this good for supporting the main idea of the essay? What other disadvantages could be mentioned to add support for the main idea?

4. Underline *studying abroad* each time you see it in this short essay. Each time it appears, it is the subject of the sentence and followed by *is* or *would be*. A wider range of vocabulary and grammatical structures would strengthen this essay. Rewrite one of the sentences in paragraph 3 to avoid this repetition of vocabulary and grammatical structure.

**Questions for Writing Sample #5:**

1. This writer gives a point of view and supports it consistently throughout the letter. However, although the last paragraph refers to “*All these important problems,*” not very many problems are actually mentioned or developed. What are some additional reasons the writer could have included?

2. Underline the places where the writer uses *of course*. Does that phrase add anything important to the sentences? What is the effect of using this same phrase twice in a short letter?

3. The first sentence of paragraph 3 communicates a problem with studying abroad but is a bit confusing because of grammar and syntax errors. Rewrite that sentence to improve it.

4. Is paragraph 4 original language? Is it specifically relevant to this topic or could it be the last sentence of an entirely different letter? Write a new conclusion that shows clearly that it is not simply memorized language to fit any topic but instead was written specifically for this topic.

**Questions for Writing Sample #3:**

1. Compare this letter to the letter in Writing Sample 5. What differences do you see in the ways the writers support their viewpoint. Consider the number of reasons and how they are developed in paragraphs 2 and 3 in both samples.

2. Compare this letter to Writing Sample 6 in terms of sentence structure and vocabulary.

3. There is no “signpost” (such as *all in all* or *finally*) at the beginning of the last paragraph. Do you think there needs to be one there? Why or why not?

4. Writing Sample 3 earned a Pass while Writing Samples 5 and 6 earned a Low Pass. What features of Writing Sample 3 helped it earn a higher score than the other papers earned? You may want to think about it in terms of the ECCE rating criteria: content and development; organization and connection of ideas; linguistic range and control; and communicative effect.
STAGES 2 and 3: Pre-Writing and Drafting

Lesson Plan and Exercises for Use with New Prompts (see Appendix 2)

General Suggestions:

1. Decide how many prompts you/your students will have time to practice. We suggest starting with 4 prompts.
2. Half of the prompts (first 2) should be used without a timer. Give yourself/students as much time as you/they need, and allow use of dictionaries; focus on producing clear, organized, and grammatically correct writing.
3. Get feedback from a teacher, tutor, or peer editor, and revise accordingly.
4. Focus on the feedback when writing the next essay or letter, so you/the students remember to pay attention to specific weaknesses or areas to improve.
5. Students: When you have done the un-timed writing, switch to timed writing, so you can practice under test conditions. For each letter or essay that you write, get someone (teacher/tutor/peer editor) to read it and comment if possible. Even practice test responses can be edited or revised afterward for additional practice.
6. Teachers: You may want to separate each of the new prompts onto separate pages and choose the topics/prompts for the students, especially after they have completed the un-timed practice and are ready for timed practice.

Specific Steps: Summary

1. Pre-writing/brainstorming
2. Organizing main ideas
3. Adding details
4. Drafting/putting paragraphs together
5. Editing

Details:

1. Brainstorming/Pre-Writing
   - What is your true opinion about the topic? It will be easier to write about a topic if you are writing about what you believe. Alternatively, you can practice writing two responses for each topic, taking both sides of the issue.
   - What vocabulary will you use for this topic? Brainstorm your active vocabulary (avoid using a dictionary or other resource when you are practicing under test conditions), and create a graphically organized list of key content words you think you will need: verbs, nouns, and adjectives/adverbs. Your vocabulary may be represented in an outline format, word web, 2- or 3-column chart (e.g., showing word, definition, example, synonyms), or any other format you find useful.
2. Organize Your Main Ideas
   - Start from the big picture: state your opinion.
   - Identify the main reason you hold this opinion.
   - Other reasons—first, list them in any order. Then when all main ideas are listed, put them in a logical order.

3. Add Details
   - Add some specific examples or details that make your point.

4. Compose Paragraphs
   - Group your ideas into coherent paragraphs with clear topics, and draft the paragraphs of your essay.

**STAGE 4: Edit and Revise**

- Check for organization and logical flow of your ideas.
- Eliminate repetition and clichés (overused and unoriginal phrases).
- Make sure you have not forgotten any of your main ideas or details from steps 1 and 2.
Appendix 1

ECCE Writing Samples with Commentary

Note: the sample responses here are reproduced from our ECCE Annotated Writing Samples document, which has a total of 9 writing samples with commentary. The numbering of the essays and letters refers to the original document, for users who would like to refer to them in the longer resource as well. To access this original resource, visit the resource library on the Michigan Language Assessment website at https://michiganassessment.org/resources/ and select the following search options:

Test=ECCE, Language Skills=Writing, Resource Type=Preparation Activities;

or, click on this direct link:

https://michiganassessment.org/resources/?fwp_tests=ecce&fwp_language_skills=writing&fwp_resource_types=preparation-activities

Three sample ECCE responses are presented here, based on two different prompts, along with detailed comments and an approximate score range for each. The following two prompts are represented in these samples:

Question 1: Writing Samples 5, 6

In order to provide its students with a global education, Johnson University has added a new requirement for students in order to graduate. All students must study abroad in a foreign country for one academic term. Some parents and students worry that studying abroad will be too expensive. Many feel that the decision to study abroad should be a choice.

Question A (Sample 6):
Some students choose to do their college education in a foreign country while others stay in their home country for university. What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying in a foreign country? Give examples to support your opinion.

Question B (Sample 5):
Write a letter to the president of the university, explaining what you think of the decision to make students study abroad for one academic term. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons to support your opinion. Start your letter with “Dear President.”

Question 2: Writing Sample 3

Tomorrow, the city council will vote on whether to build a café and nature museum in the Smithton Forest. The city believes this will allow more people to enjoy this land. Some people disagree with the decision of the council. They say it is best to leave this area wild and untouched. The city has other cafés and museums that people can visit, they say.

Question B:
Write a letter to the newspaper explaining what you think of the city council’s plan for the land. Do you think building in the forest is a good idea? Why or why not? Begin your letter, “Dear Editor.”
Writing Sample 6

It is widely believed that, studying abroad is the best choice for a student. However, I believe that it would be very difficult not only for a student but also for their parents.

First of all, studying abroad surely would be a new adventure for a student. So, student would have the chance to learn about an other culture e.t.c. Furthermore studying abroad would be very beneficial for students too, because so, they would become more responsible. For instance, if a student leave his/her country and go away from his/her parents, he/she immediately became more responsible than before because there where he/she will go there would be no one who will care about him/her.

On the other hand, studying abroad is very dangerous. I believe that in a foreign country there are many bullies who want to harm foreign students. In addition, studying abroad is not the easiest thing for parents. I believe that it would be too expensive and many parents would not afford it.

All in all, I consider that studying in a foreign country is not as preferable as studying in a home country for students because there are plenty difficulties about it.
Writing Sample 6 – Commentary

- Paragraph 1 indicates the new policy would be difficult for students and their parents, but then dedicates the majority of the response to talking about the positive things associated with that policy, thus creating some dissonance for the reader. The writer is able to support ideas; therefore, this is a B2 level performance, but the response can certainly be improved.

- As previously discussed, the last sentence of the introduction presents the writer’s stance that studying abroad “would be very difficult not only for a student but also for their parents” and the following paragraph starts with the transitional phrase “first of all,” but then talks about the benefits of studying abroad. Thus, “first of all” is misused and causes confusion.

  It is possible to use “first of all” correctly here. For example: “First of all, it should be admitted that there are advantages to studying abroad … . However … .” Alternately, the writer could use a different cohesive device.

  Cohesive devices between and within sentences seem problematic as well, especially in paragraph 2 (“so”, “because so”). This writer would benefit from going over the meaning and use of cohesive devices.

- As the essay is quite short to begin with, repetitive words such as “believe” and “studying abroad” stand out. While repetition may be beneficial in emphasizing points, this does not appear to be intentional on the part of the writer. Ways to vary the language include using synonyms (think, learning in a different country), omitting words if possible (in many cases, “believe” could be taken out), and changing the sentence structure (notice that the writer consistently writes “I believe” and “studying abroad” in the beginning of the sentence). Changing vocabulary can help improve the cohesiveness of an essay.

- With the writer expressing their opinion and then discussing the advantages and disadvantages, the examinee does not seem to understand the purpose of this writing. Furthermore, the misuse of cohesive devices and disorganized ideas (in paragraph 3, why is the idea of money under the controlling idea of safety?) cause confusion for the reader.

> Writing Sample 6 is an example of a Low Pass (650-745) writing performance.
Writing Sample 5

Dear President,

I have recently read the article in the newspaper about the decision which was made and shows that all students of Johnson University must study abroad. Personally, I disagree with this decision and I believe that it’s better all students to have the opportunity to choose what they want to do.

Firstly, some students will not be able to study abroad because their families will have economic problems. This means that students who have economic problems can’t graduate and of course they can’t continue in this university. In addition, they will search for another university and the university will lose them from students.

Another big problem is that the students who will not want to go because they don’t want to leave their home and their country, they will feel homesick. Moreover, they will want to come back and of course they will not concentrate in their subjects.

All these important problems will happen if you make this decision. I hope you to take my suggestions into account.

Sincerely,

Leonidas
Writing Sample 5 – Commentary

• The writer of this response expresses a point of view (“I disagree with this decision and I believe that it’s better all students to have the opportunity to choose what they want to do”) and is able to give reasons in support of that opinion (“economic problems,” “students who will not want to go because they don’t want to leave their home and their country, they will feel homesick”), providing some detail. The essay is quite short, though, so adding more information to develop the ideas would help to create a richer response.

• The writer is able to connect some of the ideas through the use of transitional words (“firstly,” “another big problem,” “moreover”), which occur at the beginning of sentences. This is fairly typical of learners at the B2 level. Help them improve by teaching them ways of creating cohesion (such as through pronoun use or synonyms) other than using lexical cohesive devices.

• “False friends” or “false cognates” are words in two languages that look or sound similar, but actually have different meanings. The word “economic” is an example of a false friend between Greek and English. In fact, a corpus study shows it’s the highest frequency false friend between the two languages. Instead of using the word “economic,” the writer could use “financial” to describe “problems.” As false friends can mislead learners, it would be helpful for students to review a list of these commonly confused words.

• “Of course” can be an effective rhetorical device to communicate a certain shared perspective between writer and reader. In this case, the repetition of “and of course they” reads more like a phrase lazily used that ends up highlighting the lack of variety in the writer’s sentence structures, and thus weakens its rhetorical effect.

In general, it’s good for writers to make sure that any repetition is intentional and serves a known purpose. Writers will also want to be careful with the language used to indicate degrees of certainty (“of course”).

▶ Writing Sample 5 is an example of a Low Pass (650-745) writing performance.
Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter to express my opinion about what the city council is going to do to our city’s forest. I think that it would be distasteful to destroy a forest for a building.

First of all, our town doesn’t have a lot of forests. Maybe two or three, and as it’s mentioned in the article, our city has a lot of cafes and museums. So why do we have to destroy a beautiful natural place? What will residents from other cities say about our humiliating action? Many tourists but mostly residents like the Smithton forest just like it is, and they would be really disappointed with city council’s decision, unless they change their mind.

On the other hand, if city council’s members have already decided to build either a café or a museum in the forest and the mayor has agreed with them, then the best option would be the museum. A reasonable reason is because the city has up to twenty cafes, whereas it only has three or four museums the maximum. Secondly, the employees of the museum could introduce visitors to interesting places where are worth it to go and visit them, and also the museum could include a variety of things that are selected from the forest like pieces of different kinds of trees or pieces of insects that only the forest might include, etc. Furthermore, it would be an economical benefit for our city because I believe that most tourists or even residents would find it interesting. If this museum will be build I will definitely go to check it out.

I don’t believe that it’s right to destroy natural tourist attraction and I’m sure that many people will dislike it as they are going to do with the museum but at least it will probably be a benefit for our city’s economics but also it’s tourism.
Writing Sample 3 – Commentary

- The writer’s arguments are reasonably well developed with supporting details such as numbers in support of the argument (“two or three” forests, “twenty cafes,” “three or four museums”). The writer also gives suggestions on what the museum could include (“introduce visitors to interesting places,” “include … things selected from the forests”), and mentions that it would be an “economical benefit.” Having various types of support makes the writer’s arguments richer.

- There is a good use of inter- and intra-sentence connectors to help with the flow of ideas between and within paragraphs. Inter-sentence linkers include transitional words (“on the other hand”, “secondly”, “furthermore”) and intra-sentence linkers include subordinating (“whereas”, “because”) and coordinating conjunctions (“and also”). The cohesive devices are used mostly correctly. The ideas flow well in general with the writer’s opinion that cafes and museums should not be built, and the writer further gives an opinion on the type of building to be built if one had to be chosen, which was captured by the conditional “on the other hand, if … then.” The ability to write a multi-part argument (as reflected in the use of the ‘if-’ conditional) makes this stronger than the just-passing responses with the usual reasons for or against an idea.

- The writer has good uses of conditionals (“… they would be really disappointed with city council’s decision, unless they change their mind” and “… if city council’s members have already decided to build either a café or a museum in the forest and the major has agreed with them, the best option would be the museum”). In the first example using “unless,” the writer is showing that it is possible for the council to change their mind which is the goal of the writer as it is clear that the writer does not want the council to build structures in the forest. The “if … , then” sentence is used in the third paragraph to rationalize building a museum rather than a café if one had to build something. The writer’s use of complex grammatical structures in addition to a range of higher-level words such as “humiliating action” and “worth it” shows that the writer is able to advance rhetorical goals.

- To persuade the reader and to express the writer’s emotion, the writer uses several adjectives to show the mood (“disgusting,” “destroy,” and “beautiful natural”), personal pronouns like “we “ and “our” to build solidarity and common cause with the reader, as well as rhetorical questions (“So why do we have to destroy a beautiful natural place. What will residents from other cities say about our humiliating action?”). As a whole, the writer is able to effectively convey their arguments by using these different types of rhetorical devices to persuade the reader.

▶ Writing Sample 3 is an example of a Pass (750-835) writing performance.
Appendix 2

ECCE Practice Prompts

1. The City Times

**New Book Sharing Program**
The public library announced today that it will be creating a new way to share books in neighborhoods throughout the city. There will be a place in each neighborhood where residents can leave used books that they don’t want anymore. Residents will also be able to take books that other people have left there. The books don’t have to be returned.

*Letter:* Write a letter to the director of the library, stating what you think about this idea. Give specific reasons and detailed examples to support your opinion. Begin your letter “Dear Director.”

*Essay:* Some people prefer to read traditional paper books. Others, however, like to read “e-books,” or digital books that are read using an electronic device. Which do you prefer? Support your opinion with specific reasons and examples.

2. The City Times

**Disagreement Over Higher Food Prices**
City officials have passed a law that requires a higher price for unhealthy food and drinks, such as potato chips and soda. They believe that the extra cost will encourage people to buy healthier food and reduce the rates of weight-related illnesses. Store owners believe that this will hurt their business, and many citizens feel that the extra cost is unfair.

*Letter:* Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper explaining what you think of the decision to increase the price of unhealthy food. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Give reasons to support your opinion. Begin your letter, “Dear Editor.”

*Essay:* Some people believe that governments should make people eat healthier. Others believe that people should be free to make their own food choices. What do you think? Explain your opinion, giving specific reasons to support your view.

3. The City Times

**Garbage on Roberts Beach**
City government officials reported yesterday that they are very worried about the amount of garbage on Roberts Beach. The beach is becoming increasingly polluted as more visitors are leaving bottles, plastic bags, and other kinds of garbage behind. Roberts Beach is known as one of the city’s most beautiful areas, so the city government wants to solve this problem soon.

*Letter:* Write a letter to the newspaper suggesting solutions to the garbage problem on the beach. What can the city government and local people do? Provide details to support your ideas. Start your letter, “Dear Editor.”
Essay: Some people think that we should do more to protect our local environments. How important do you think this issue is? Write an essay explaining your opinion, giving specific reasons and examples to support your view.

4. The City Times

Cell Phones Not Allowed in Schools
Local schools have announced that students will no longer be allowed to bring their cell phones to class. Teachers say that mobile phones take students’ attention away from the lesson and make it difficult to teach. The new rule will be effective at the start of the next school year.

Letter: Write a letter to school officials explaining what you think of their decision. Do you think they are making the right choice to ban cell phones in class? Why or why not? Begin your letter, “Dear School Officials.”

Essay: Some people think that parents shouldn’t buy cell phones for young children. Other people think children need to have a cell phone. What do you think? Explain your opinion, giving specific reasons to support your view.

5. The City Times

New Books for Schools
Many local schools have been changing the list of books that students must read for their literature lessons. Instead of classical literature, teachers are asking students to read new, modern books. The parents in our local school are not happy with this idea. They want children to continue to study classical literature.

Letter: Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper explaining what you think about children only studying modern literature. You should explain whether or not you agree with the parents and why. Start your letter, “Dear Editor.”

Essay: Some people believe that schools should regularly update the material that they teach to students. They think that this will help students be successful in the future. What do you think? Explain your opinion, giving specific reasons to support your view.

6. The City Times

Changes to the School Day
The principal at the local high school has decided to change school start time from 7:00 am to 10:00 am. His reason for the change was based on research that shows teenagers require much more sleep in order to perform well in school. As a result of this change, students will remain in school until 5:00 pm. Many teachers and parents are shocked by this plan.

Letter: Write a letter to the editor of The City Times explaining what you think about this plan. Do you think this is a good way to help high school students perform better in school? Why or why not? Start your letter, “Dear Editor.”

Essay: When children become teenagers, their body clocks change, often causing them to have trouble waking up early. Therefore, many doctors
recommend that teens should start school at a later time than young children. Do you agree with this idea? Give reasons to support your opinion.

7. The City Times

*Getting Married Later*
Statistics show that people in the United States are staying single longer than they used to. In 1970, the average age to get married was 21 for women and 23 for men. Today, many men and women don’t get married until their late twenties. Some people wonder whether this is a good or a bad change.

*Letter:* Do you think it is a good idea for people to wait until their late twenties to get married? Write a letter to the City Times expressing your opinion. Explain, giving reasons to support your view. Begin your letter, “Dear Editor.”

*Essay:* What age do you think is the right age for people to get married? Explain why you think such an age is the best age to marry.

8. The City Times

*Not Enough Farmers*
Today, very few young people choose careers in farming. Most youth who live in the countryside decide to move to a big city and find employment there. Experts are now concerned that without farmers it will be difficult for our country to produce enough food. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is looking into new programs to solve this problem.

*Letter:* Why do you think young people do not want a career as a farmer? Is there anything the government can do to encourage people to live and work in the countryside? Write a letter to The City Times explaining your view. Begin your letter, “Dear Editor.”

*Essay:* What will be the consequences of a country not having enough farmers? What can be done to solve this problem? Give specific examples to support your opinion.

9. The City Times

*Students to Graduate Early*
Area high schools will allow students to graduate early if they pass a series of final exams at the end of year three. Until now, students could only take the exams after year four. School officials believe this will allow bright students to move on to more challenging work in university. It will also mean more resources for the students who remain for their fourth year.

*Letter:* Write a letter to the newspaper editor explaining what you think of the schools’ decision. Do you think the schools are making a good decision? Why or why not? Start your letter, “Dear Editor.”

*Essay:* Some people say that high school doesn’t prepare students for college. Others think students who study hard in high school should be able to succeed in college. What do you think? Explain your opinion, giving reasons to support your view.
10. The City Times

*New Healthy Citizens Program*

This week government officials started a new healthy living program hoping to promote better eating and exercise habits. The program offers classes and activities for people of all ages at a very low cost. Local doctors and health care officials support the program, saying that the health of the local citizens should be important for the city.

**Letter:** Write a letter to the city mayor explaining what you think of this new program. Do you think it is a good way for the city to spend its money? Why or why not? Begin your letter, “Dear Mayor.”

**Essay:** Some people think exercise is more important than healthy eating. Others feel a healthy diet is more important. What do you think? Explain your opinion, giving specific reasons to support your view.