

ACT writing prompts for practice

1. A school board is concerned that the state's requirements for core courses in mathematics, English, science, and social studies may prevent students from taking important elective courses like music, other languages, and vocational education. The school board would like to encourage more high school students to take elective courses and is considering two proposals. One proposal is to lengthen the school day to provide students with the opportunity to take elective courses. The other proposal is to offer elective courses in the summer. Write a letter to the school board in which you argue for lengthening the school day or for offering elective courses during the summer. Explain why you think your choice will encourage more students to take elective courses. Begin your letter: "Dear School Board:"

Source: www.act.org, 2009

2. Many successful adults recall a time in life when they were considered a failure at one pursuit or another. Some of these people feel strongly that their previous failures taught them valuable lessons and led to their later successes. Others maintain that they went on to achieve success for entirely different reasons. In your opinion, can failure lead to success? Or is failure simply its own experience? In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

Source: www.sparknotes.com, 2009

3. Educators debate extending high school to five years because of increasing demands on students from employers and colleges to participate in extracurricular activities and community service in addition to having high grades. Some educators support extending high school to five years because they think students need more time to achieve all that is expected of them. Other educators do not support extending high school to five years; they think that students would lose interest in school and that attendance would drop in the fifth year. In your opinion, should high school be extended to five years?

Source: www.actstudent.org, 2009

4. In some high schools, many teachers and parents have encouraged the administration to adopt a dress code that sets guidelines for what students can wear in the school building. Some teachers and parents support a dress code because they think it will improve the learning environment in the school. Other teachers and parents do not support a dress code; they think it restricts an individual student's freedom of expression. In your opinion, should high schools adopt dress codes for students?

Source: The Real ACT Prep Guide, 2008

5. The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires all school libraries receiving certain federal funds to install and use blocking software to prevent students from viewing material considered “harmful to minors.” However, some studies conclude that blocking software in schools damages educational opportunities for students, both by blocking access to Web pages that are directly related to the state-mandated curriculums and by restricting broader inquiries of both students and teachers. In your view, should the schools block access to certain Internet Web sites?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2008

6. New laws are being proposed that would require schools to accommodate students who wish to transfer to a different school if the school falls below a certain level on statewide standardized tests. Supporters of this law believe that it is a student’s right to transfer to a new school if his or her current school is not fulfilling its duties. Opponents argue that this law is impractical — what would happen if all the students requested transfers? — and unfairly weighs test scores without considering other factors at a school. In your opinion, should students be allowed to transfer if schools score below a certain level on standardized tests?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2008

7. College professors who have significant research and teaching experience are often rewarded with “tenure.” Once tenured, a professor holds his or her job without review and with little danger of being fired or replaced. Some people believe that high school teachers should be tenured as a reward for dedicated service. These people argue that tenure will attract highly qualified candidates to the profession and also allow teachers to do their jobs without fear of losing them. Opponents of this plan believe that tenure only leads to poor teaching. Without any fear of losing their jobs, teachers will not care as much about their students. In your opinion, should high school teachers receive tenure?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2008

8. Many communities are considering adopting curfews for high school students. Some educators and parents favor curfews because they believe it will encourage students to focus more on their homework and make them more responsible. Others feel curfews are up to families, not the community, and that students today need freedom to work and participate in social activities in order to mature properly. Do you think that communities should impose curfews on high school students?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2008

9. In response to articles examining sensitive topics such as dating and partying, many schools are considering censoring their newspapers. Some schools believe that these topics are not appropriate for student-run papers, while others believe that, as long as what is printed is true, student papers should have the same freedoms as regular newspapers do. What is your opinion on this topic?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2008

10. In some states, legislators have debated whether teenagers should be required to maintain a “C” grade average in school before receiving a driver’s license. Some people think this would be a good policy because having passing grades shows that students are responsible enough to be good drivers. Other people think such a policy would not be appropriate because they see no relationship between grades in school and driving skills. In your opinion, should teenagers be required to maintain a “C” average in school before receiving a driver’s license?

Source: The Real ACT Prep Guide, 2005

11. In some high schools, students are required to complete a certain number of community service hours prior to graduation. Some people think community service is a good requirement because they think students will benefit from this experience. Other people think schools should not require community service because students will resent the requirement and, as a result, will not benefit from the experience. In your opinion, should high schools require students to complete a certain number of hours of community service?

Source: The Real ACT Prep Guide, 2005

12. Some high schools in the United States have considered creating separate classrooms for male and female students in subjects such as mathematics and science. Some educators think separate classes will be beneficial because students will be less distracted from learning. Other educators think having separate classes for females and males will not be beneficial because it will seem to support stereotypes about differences in ability between males and females. In your opinion, should high schools create separate classes for male and female students?

Source: The Real ACT Prep Guide, 2005

13. In recent years, many schools have adopted a curriculum based on “great books.” These schools require students to study certain classic books of Western civilization, arguing that familiarity with these “great books” is essential to education. However, opponents of this curriculum argue that forcing teachers and students to use only the “great books,” most of which are written by white, European authors, results in a biased view of the world. In your opinion, should schools adopt a curriculum based on “great books”?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2005

14. Schools in some states have changed their school calendars so that they are now year-round schools. Advocates of year-round schooling argue that the traditional summer break is a waste of students’ time that could otherwise be spent learning. Opponents charge that today’s students are already overburdened with the stresses of school, and need the summer to get a much-needed break. In your view, should the traditional three-month summer vacation from school be maintained?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2005

15. Most schools have established honor codes or other rules to prevent students from cheating on exams and other school assignments. Many students admit to cheating, arguing that the practice has become so common — and is so rarely penalized — that it is the only way to survive in today’s competitive academic world. Educators, however, feel that such behaviors only hurt the students, and that cheating in school is just the first step to more academic dishonesty, professional misconduct, and unethical business practices in the future. In your view, should high schools become more tolerant of cheating?

Source: The Princeton Review’s Cracking the ACT, 2005

16. Fast-food franchises are installing outlets in some high schools, selling hamburgers, fried chicken, tacos, fries, and sodas. Many soda companies already pay a great deal of money to be allowed to install soda machines in high schools. The money from these commercial ventures helps pay for athletic equipment, field trips, and audio-visual equipment. On the other hand, fast food is greatly contributing to the epidemic of obesity among America’s youth. Placing fast-food outlets in schools encourages students to eat food that is high in salt, fat, and empty calories. In your opinion, should fast-food franchises be allowed in high schools?

Source: Peterson’s Master the ACT Assessment, 2005

17. In this country, most people see and hear advertising for many different products every day. Some people think advertising is useful because it provides important information about many different products. Other people think advertising is not useful because it tries to persuade people to buy products they do not really need. In your opinion, does advertising serve a useful purpose in our society?

Source: 2005 ACT Educator Workshops



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