

Passage 5

Read the following passage. Then answer the questions that follow. Use the Tip below each question to help you choose the correct answer. When you finish, read the answer explanations at the end of this chapter.

The Truth about Year-Round Education

by Rebecca Simonson

No More Teachers, No More Books

Summer. For many students, summer means vacations with their families, time to relax with their friends, or opportunities to make extra money at summer jobs. But believe it or not, summer still means school for some students. These kids aren't attending classes because of poor grades or to try to get ahead but because their school districts run on a year-round schedule.

The traditional ten-month school schedule that most students are accustomed to was formed at a time when many Americans lived on farms. During the summer, children were needed to help their families work the fields and prepare for the fall harvest. Even after farming declined, many schools stuck with the original schedule because many felt that it was too hot to keep students cooped up inside all day when many schools lacked air-conditioning systems. However, in recent years there has been a movement to institute year-round education in school districts throughout the United States.

How Year-Round Education Really Works

Despite what many people think, many students who go to school year-round don't spend more days in class than children that attend traditional schools. Besides the extended school-day program, which considerably lengthens the time that children spend in school, most students in year-round programs spend the traditional 170 to 180 days in class, but their vacation time is broken up throughout the year.

Some schools use a single-track system. This means that all students and faculty are in session and take breaks at the same time. This system has several subsystems, including a flexible all-year calendar that allows students and teachers to take short breaks when it is convenient for them. Modified schedules are also used in this system. Some schools will have forty-five days of instruction followed by a fifteen-day break, while others keep students and teachers in class for ninety days and then break for thirty days.

Multitrack systems are also used in year-round education, usually by schools that have overcrowding issues. Multitrack systems usually have three to five tracks, and each student

is assigned to a specific track. While students in certain tracks are in school, one or two other tracks will be on vacation. This is generally used so that a district can educate more students without having to build new schools or shipping students to other districts.

Benefits

Besides allowing school districts to accommodate an ever-growing number of students, year-round education is thought to have many more benefits. Some argue that cutting out the long summer break decreases the amount of information students lose while not receiving instruction. This allows teachers to focus more on new material rather than wasting time reviewing at the beginning of the year.

Others feel that more frequent breaks mean that both students and teachers will be absent less often because this schedule allows for time to rest and relax during the school year. Another appealing aspect of the system is that the program not only helps to alleviate overcrowding but also would save taxpayers' money that would need to be spent creating new schools and hiring more faculty. Supporters of the system also argue that year-round education is used throughout the world in many countries where students perform better academically than their U.S. counterparts.

Drawbacks

Of course, there are those who believe that a year-round school system is not the answer to America's educational problems. Critics argue that doing away with summer vacation will greatly disrupt many families' social schedules. Parents of young children will have to find someone to watch their kids during these short breaks because they cannot attend camps or day care usually offered during the summer months. Also, many feel that extracurricular activities would suffer under the year-round education system. Sports and music events often require interaction among school districts. If one school is year-round and another is not, scheduling a time for mutual activities could be very difficult.

The most important argument against the system is that there is no statistically significant evidence showing that year-round education improves students' academic abilities or increases standardized test scores. Supporters argue that this is not the case, but critics point to several studies that show only minor improvements among students participating in year-round education.

So Long, Summer?

According to the National Association for Year-Round Education, 3,181 American schools had adopted this alternative educational system by the 2002–2003 school year. Does this mean that students should live in fear of the day when their summers are no longer their own? Well, let's just say that they shouldn't throw in their beach towels just yet. Between fall 2004 through spring 2008, Miami-Dade public schools tried a year-round school but dropped the program because there was no difference in test scores between the targeted schools and the control group.

Parents, teachers, and students across the United States continue to debate the positive and negative aspects of the program. The topic remains a controversial one, and many school districts have opposed a switch. But the truth is, American students continue to lag behind children in Europe and Asia academically. Perhaps a little less fun in the sun and a little more time in the classroom might be just what students need to help them get ahead.

Questions

10 Read these sentences from the article.

The traditional ten-month school schedule that most students are accustomed to was formed at a time when many Americans lived on farms. During the summer, children were needed to help their families work the fields and prepare for the fall harvest.

The author includes these sentences in order to show that

- F. schools provided better education to students years ago.
- G. the old ten-month school schedule should still be used everywhere.
- H. the reasoning behind the ten-month school schedule is out of date.
- I. the traditional ten-month school schedule is unfair to city children

Tip

Think of what these sentences tell us about the old school schedule. Do these conditions still exist?

- 11 One positive effect of the multitrack system in year-round education is that
- A. families can still take long summer vacations if they choose.
 - B. all students and faculty are in session and take breaks at the same time.
 - C. teachers can focus more on new material rather than on reviewing at the beginning of the year.
 - D. school districts can educate more students without building more schools.

**Tip**

Reread the paragraph on multitrack systems in the second section of the article. Which answer choice fits the information in this paragraph?

- 12 In this article, the author includes subheadings mainly to
- F. introduce the topic of the section that follows.
 - G. make humorous comments on her topic.
 - H. make the selection look easier to read.
 - I. encourage readers to skip ahead to more interesting sections.

**Tip**

Reread the subheadings and think about how they relate to the sections of the article.

13 Read the following sentences from the article.

Does this mean that students should live in fear of the day when their summers are no longer their own? Well, let's just say that they shouldn't throw in their beach towels just yet.

Which of the following is the best paraphrase of the idea in these sentences?

- A. Students who want to can still spend their summers away from school as long as they agree to do extra work.
- B. Students need not worry that year-round schools are coming to their area anytime soon.
- C. Students are so fearful of losing their summers off from school that they will support almost any other compromise.
- D. Students might as well forget the idea of spending the entire summer out of school.



Tip

Think about the play on words that the author is using to make her point.

14 What is the author's point of view in this article?

- F. She thinks all schools would be better off on a multitrack system.
- G. She thinks more schools should consider year-round education.
- H. She thinks a single-track system is better than a multitrack system.
- I. She thinks that schools in warm climates should have the summer off.



Tip

Think about why the author wrote this article. How does she feel about her subject matter? What important point does she want to make to her readers?

Passage 6

Read the following passage. Then answer the questions that follow. Use the Tip below each question to help you choose the correct answer. When you finish, read the answer explanations at the end of this chapter.

Blah, Blah, Blog

A shortened form of *weblog*, *blog* is the name given to a kind of online journal that is updated frequently. Blogs can include original text, photos, links to other Web sites and blogs, and pretty much anything else.

Blogging (the act of creating or posting to a blog) developed from technically adept Internet surfers who kept logs of what was worth viewing on the Internet. Readers could come back every day to see what wonderful Web content the blogger had most recently found. Bloggers posted their findings in an easy-to-update, easy-to-read format from which they could link their readers to the sites they mentioned.

Today's blogs offer places for readers to comment and places for readers and writers to comment on comments, so that blogs are more like conversations than traditional forms of writing. Posts on blogs are listed in reverse chronological order so that the newest post is always at the top of the blog, where readers can easily find it. Older posts are archived and organized in an easy-to-navigate list so that readers can quickly search for all posts about a specific subject.

According to recent research, about 4 percent of people who spend time online read blogs, but the number is increasing. Because most search engines direct people to blogs, many new people join the blogosphere every day. Anyone who reads should be reading a blog because blogs discuss every subject under the sun, and blogs often have the most up-to-the-minute information. The surge in the popularity of reality TV programs suggests that people find real life and real problems worthy of their attention. According to one blog directory, there are more than 20 million blogs in the United States alone. Blogging is still a very new phenomenon but one that is gaining recognition quickly.

People write blogs because they have something to say about a number of topics. There are blogs about politics and news, fashion blogs, and blogs about TV and movies. Families use blogs to share personal photos, keep in touch with each other, and plan reunions. Some people have personal blogs, sort of like diaries, where they post their innermost feelings, and they don't allow their posts to be viewed by the public. Some people keep anonymous diaries that they do allow the public to read. Perhaps the best reason to write a blog is because you have something original to say about something people are interested in.

Creating your own blog is not difficult. Use a search engine to find one of the free blogging sites. These sites walk users through the setup process, helping first-timers post photos and

text and design a unifying motif for their blog. Some sites even let bloggers call in audio files that will post immediately to their blog. Because they are fairly easy for the novice and they are free, these sites are invaluable to beginners. Once you get established, you might want to look into the companies that host blogs for a charge. The fee is small, and the sites offer bloggers more control over the appearance of their blogs as well as more storage space.

Before you initiate your search for the precise site to host your blog, you'll want to consider a couple of factors. First, ask yourself what your blog will be about. Blogs usually have catchy titles and memorable taglines that describe the blogs' contents. Also, because nothing is more daunting than a blank page, you should brainstorm on a topic for your first entry so you don't get hung up waiting for inspiration.

As with everything else you want people to know about, you need to advertise your blog; however, that does not entail booking a commercial slot during the Super Bowl. The best way to increase readership is to read and post to plenty of other people's blogs, making sure to include a link to your blog in your comments. Include a blogroll on your site so that readers can visit the blogs that you find entertaining. Bloggers pay attention to being listed on others' sites, and they may even return the favor. In the blogosphere, what goes around comes around!

Blogulary

blog: a frequently updated online journal.

blogger: a person who writes a blog.

blogging: the act of writing a blog.

permalink: each blog entry gets a permalink (short for *permanent link*), so that readers can find a specific post quickly and easily.

post: when you add a new entry or a comment to a blog, you are posting.

comments: readers can post their comments to entries.

Bloggies: every year, the Weblog Awards, or Bloggies for short, are bestowed on the most read, enjoyed, and respected blogs on the Internet. The Bloggies are grouped into 30 award categories, and the award winners are chosen by the public.

blogosphere: the world of bloggers and blog readers.

RSS: stands for Rich Site Summary. Um, what? Well, say you find a new blog that you really like, but you keep checking back and nothing new has been added. If you sign up for the blog's RSS, you will be notified whenever a new entry has been posted.

blogroll: a list of other blogs that a blogger likes, respects, or just wants to advertise. Most people who write, read. Most people who play music listen to music. Most people who blog maintain a blogroll of blogs they admire.

Questions

15 Which of the following best describes how the author organized the information in this article?

- A. The author presents a history of blogging in chronological order.
- B. The author compares and contrasts blogging with other forms of communication.
- C. The author first explains what blogging is and then how to set up a blog.
- D. The author presents questions about blogging and then answers them.

Tip

Skim the article and think about how its information is presented. Is there an overall pattern of organization from start to finish or does the first half differ from the second half?

16 Read these sentences from the article.

Include a blogroll on your site so that readers can visit the blogs that you find entertaining. Bloggers pay attention to being listed on others' sites, and they may even return the favor. In the blogosphere, what goes around comes around!

By including this passage, the author wants to show that

- F. blogging is a cooperative effort among many writers.
- G. blogging is difficult and best left to expert writers.
- H. blogging involves stealing the work of other writers.
- I. blogging is much like a popularity contest.

Tip

Reread the passage and think about its main point. What does the author mean by "what goes around comes around"?

- 17 How does the Blogulary box help readers understand the article?
- A. It teaches readers step by step how to start their own blogs.
 - B. It provides terms and definitions associated with blogging.
 - C. It lists all the software and equipment needed to start a blog.
 - D. It gives definitions of important terms from the article.

**Tip**

Think about the title of the box. What word is the title playing on?

- 18 The author's main purpose in writing this article is to
- F. entertain readers with humorous stories about writers who become obsessed with blogging.
 - G. inform readers about how the most popular blogs were started.
 - H. encourage readers to read blogs and perhaps start blogs of their own.
 - I. caution readers about the problems associated with starting a blog.

**Tip**

What is the author trying to accomplish with the advice and details that are provided in the article?

