

Performance Task Examples

Examine the performance task vignettes on the following pages. What distinguishes these tasks from typical test “items”? What common features or characteristics do these share?

State Tour – (*History, Geography, Math, grades 5-8*)

A group of nine foreign students is visiting your school for one month as part of an international exchange program. (Don’t worry, they speak English!) The principal has asked your class to plan and budget a four-day tour of [your state or region] to help the visitors understand the state’s impact on the history and development of our nation. Plan your tour so that the visitors are shown sites that best capture the ways that [your state or region] has influenced our nation’s development.

You should prepare a written tour itinerary, including an explanation of why each site was selected. Include a map tracing the route for the four-day tour and a budget for the trip.

Musical Score – (*Music, 3- HS*)

You have been chosen to select a repertoire of three to four songs for your chorus to perform at the retirement gala for Mrs. Jones (a beloved retiring teacher). Give your reasons for the songs you have chosen and for the performance sequence you propose.

Spot Remover – (*Science - secondary*)

Chris wants to decide which of two spot removers is best. First, he tried Spot Remover A on a T-shirt that had fruit stains and chocolate stains. Next, he he tried Spot Remover B on jeans that had grass stains and rust stains. Then he compared the results.

Explain what did Chris do wrong that will make it hard for him to know which spot remover is best. Redesign the experiment to help him determine the best spot remover.

Exchange Student – (*World Languages*)

You are an exchange student in a school in [insert name of country]. A local radio station will be interviewing exchange students to learn how they celebrate holidays in their home countries. You have been asked to speak about your favorite celebration back in the United States. To prepare for the interview, record a five-minute talk in [target language] which you offer a detailed description of the origin of this celebration and describe the major activities, foods, and special memories for your selected celebration.

Performance Task Examples

Burglar Alarm – (Science – upper elementary)

Since you have learned about electric circuits, you have been asked to design a prototype of a burglar alarm to be used in homes and public buildings. Using the equipment and materials provided (batteries, wires, bulbs, electric buzzers and bells; various “building” materials), design and construct a working model of a burglar alarm that would notify a building’s occupants of a “break in.” In addition to a working model, include a diagram of the circuit(s) used to explain how the alarm works.

See My World – (Visual Art – middle school)

You have recently analyzed the narrative work of Faith Ringgold to identify ways she communicated ideas about her world. Think about your own world – your family, friends, hobbies and interests, daily experiences, and the things that are important to you. Select a drawing or painting medium, or use mixed media to create your own narrative work that visually communicates personal ideas about your world.

Spot Remover – (*Science, middle school*)

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Explain what did Chris do wrong that will make it hard for him to know which spot remover is best. Redesign the experiment to help him determine the best spot remover.

Just Swinging Around – (*Physics*)

Your design team has been asked by the City Park Department to construct a model for a new playground near the elementary school. The playground will have swing sets and see-saws. For the safety of the children who will be using the playground equipment, you must design your swings so that they don’t swing too fast or “loop-the-loop “ over the top of the swing set.

Design and conduct an experiment to determine how the variables - length, mass, height of release - affect the rate of back-and-forth movement of a swing. Be prepared to present your findings, recommendations, and a demonstration to the City Park officials.

Source: A Tool Kit for Professional Developers: Alternative Assessment

Here I Come! (*Language Arts, elementary*)

Your principal has asked all students to write a letter to next year’s teacher to help the teacher prepare for the new class. Write a letter telling your new teacher about yourself as a learner. Be sure to tell what you find easy to learn, what is most difficult to learn, and how you learn best.

Performance Task Examples – Mathematics

Painting a Schoolroom

When contractors give us an estimate on repairs, how can we know if the cost is reasonable? You have been asked by the Principal to review a painting contractor's proposal to determine whether s/he is being overcharged. (Students are given room dimensions and cost figures for materials, labor, and a 20% profit.)

Examine the proposal and write a letter to the Principal providing your evaluation of the proposal. Be sure to show your calculations so that s/he will understand how you arrived at your conclusion.

Day Care Center Playground

You have been hired by a day care agency to fence in an area to be used for a play area. You have been provided with 60 feet of fencing (in 4' sections) and a 4' gate. How can you put up the fence so the children will have the maximum amount of space in which to play?

Submit your plan for the playground area. Include a diagram, your calculations, and an explanation of why this is the best design.

Find the Best Deal

Your friend has told you that he has just upgraded his cell phone plan with BS&S. The plan offers unlimited calls and texts for a fixed monthly fee. Your current plan is based on a price per call (in minutes) and text (mbs). He insists that his new plan is the best plan available and you should choose this same plan. Is he correct in his assumption that this is the best plan for you? Why or why not? Explain your position, cite your mathematical reasons, and show table(s)/graph(s) and equation(s) to support your recommendation.

A Model Solar System

A former NBA legend, Hoops McGinty, has pledged money to the local science museum for an exhibit on our solar system. He pledges the money under one condition: that a regulation NBA basketball be used to represent some aspect of the scale display and that other NBA-related shapes and sizes be used (e.g., a basketball be used to represent a planet or moon). The building floor space is 300 by 800 feet.

As designer, how do you propose that the main exhibit hall with a model of the solar system be built to scale? Prepare a diagram with accurate measurements drawn to scale. Show your work so that Hoops can follow your reasoning will select your design.

Performance Task Examples – E/LA

Mail-Order Friend – (*Language Arts, grades K-2*)

Imagine that you have an opportunity to “order” a friend by telephone from a mail-order catalog. Think about the qualities that you want in a friend. Before you “order” your friend over the telephone, practice asking for three characteristics that you want in a friend and give an example of each characteristic. Remember to speak clearly and loud enough so that the sales person will know exactly what to send.

We Salute You - (*Language Arts, Social Studies, grades 1-4*)

Our room mother, Mrs. _____, has done many things to help us throughout the year. When people do things for you, it is important to show appreciation. We will each write a letter to her to thank her and let her know how she has helped our class.

Your letter should include all the parts of a friendly letter. Be sure to tell Mrs. _____ at least three ways she has been helpful to our class. Include at least one thing that you especially appreciate about Mrs. _____.

Movie Mogul – (*Language Arts - secondary*)

Many movies and plays originated from published novels or short stories. Identify a novel or short story that you think would make an entertaining or thought-provoking film or play. Then, write a letter or e-mail to a movie or theater producer to persuade them to hire you to develop the screenplay. Explain why you think this would be a successful film/play, suggest the actors to play the key roles, and include a sample scene to display your writing talent.

How-To Guide – (*E/LA; may include other content areas*)

Since you are an accomplished user of _____ software (e.g., iMovie, Google Docs), you have been asked to develop a User’s Guide or Tutorial to help _____ (e.g., fellow students, adults) learn to use it. Provide clear step-by-step directions for using specific features and include a Trouble-Shooting Guide for common problems that beginning users may encounter.

What’s Wrong with Holden? – (*English - High School*)

You are a member of Holden Caulfield’s case-review committee at the hospital from which Holden is telling his story. Your task is to write: 1) a diagnostic report for the hospital OR 2) a letter to Holden’s parents explaining what’s wrong with him.

Support your analysis by citing Holden’s own words and actions from the text.