

Assessment Example



Davidson Academy

Academic Readiness Assessment Example

Families who are considering the Davidson Academy generally want to learn as much as possible about what they can expect from the assessment portion of our admissions process. The academic readiness assessment is a crucial part of how we determine goodness of fit for the Academy and we have designed this example and the corresponding FAQ's to help candidates better understand the process.

(Please note that the example you are about to view is not an actual assessment in current circulation; rather, it consists of a set of examples that would be on par with what we currently utilize and a body of explanations that are meant to add transparency to the process.)

The Scoring Rubric

Math **[30 points]**

Exam Based

Critical Reading, Academic Discussion, Abstract Thinking, *Affect **[45 points]**

Logical inferences, demonstration of abstract thinking ability, critical reading, etc.
(rated both before and after instruction has been given)

** Affect includes (social-emotional orientation toward schoolwork) Remaining on task, receptivity to instruction, active listening, conscientiousness toward work, attention to detail, following directions, level of engagement etc.*

Written Expression **[25 Points]**

Word choice, logical and efficient sentences, control of conventions, etc.

Objective Science Reasoning **[10 Points]**

Objective Reading Comprehension **[10 Points]**

This example is meant to address some common concerns such as...

- ❑ Is my child academically ready for admission into the Academy?
- ❑ How can I get a feel for how he/she might do on this assessment?
- ❑ I know that success on the academic readiness assessment is a crucial part of admission... but what does the assessment actually involve?
- ❑ I think my child might be a good fit for the Academy, but I am not sure if this is the right time for us to request a place in the assessment pool. Traveling is expensive and I would hate to sign up before my child is ready. Should we wait a year or act now?

Important Disclaimer

- Please note that if you opt to use this material as a trial run or practice test, the Davidson Academy staff will not be in a position to rate the results, nor can we analyze or otherwise consider the ratings given by outside parties. We are only able to evaluate the information, work samples, and observations necessary for ethical and consistent admission practices in the context of our own on-site academic readiness assessment.

FAQ's Concerning Assessment



FAQ #1

- The Academy has been characterized as a “writing across the curriculum” school. Does this mean that the assessment is primarily a writing test?
- This is not an accurate assumption. The scoring rubric awards 90 points for categories like math, critical reading, critical thinking, academic discussion, and affect, while the portion of the assessment dedicated purely to written expression comprises 25 points. Writing is certainly an important aspect of Academy curriculum because we associate academic challenge with the opportunity for students to present understanding in their own words. The readiness assessment has been designed to accurately reflect Academy curriculum and, thus, written expression must be proportionately reflected. However, the other aspects (critical thinking, calculating, critical reading, etc.) that comprise 90 points within the scoring rubric are also very important as our scoring process reflects.

FAQ #2

- ❑ Even if the *scoring process* keeps written expression proportionate with other academic strengths, it still seems like students who have not had good writing instruction might be unfairly disadvantaged relative to those who have. Is this true?
- ❑ No, this is absolutely not true. If things had evolved differently during the first few years of our operation, this might have been a hypothetical possibility. However, the fact is that among our pool of applicants, it has been extremely rare to find students who have observably received effective *expository* writing instruction. Probably less than 2% of our total pool of applicants across the first four years of operation have demonstrated prior access to this benefit. This reflects trends in public and private education that value creative writing over expository writing and essentially places all of our applicants on a level playing field. Moreover, at this point, we have normed our assessment expectations and groomed our curriculum to serve this overwhelming majority who need expository writing instruction.

FAQ #3

- What does the website mean by “curriculum based” measure and how do you decide which material will be used on the assessment?

- When we say that our assessment is a “curriculum based measure,” it means that the majority of the materials used at assessment have come directly from our own curriculum. In selecting the material from our curriculum, we use the following guidelines:
 - We look critically at potential assessment items to be sure that they were *extremely effective* when we used them in our classrooms.
 - We only utilize material that has met with universal success when it was presented to our current students so that expectations are crafted in a fair and consistent manner.
 - We opt for materials that will offer the maximum amount of accessibility to applicants who vary widely in terms of academic experience and maturity.

Sample Assessment Schedule

8 a.m.-11:20 a.m.

- ❑ Read “Come on, Wagon” and respond to questions
- ❑ Discuss “Come on, Wagon”
- ❑ Snack and break
- ❑ Write the essay rough draft
- ❑ Begin *Objective* Critical Reading Test

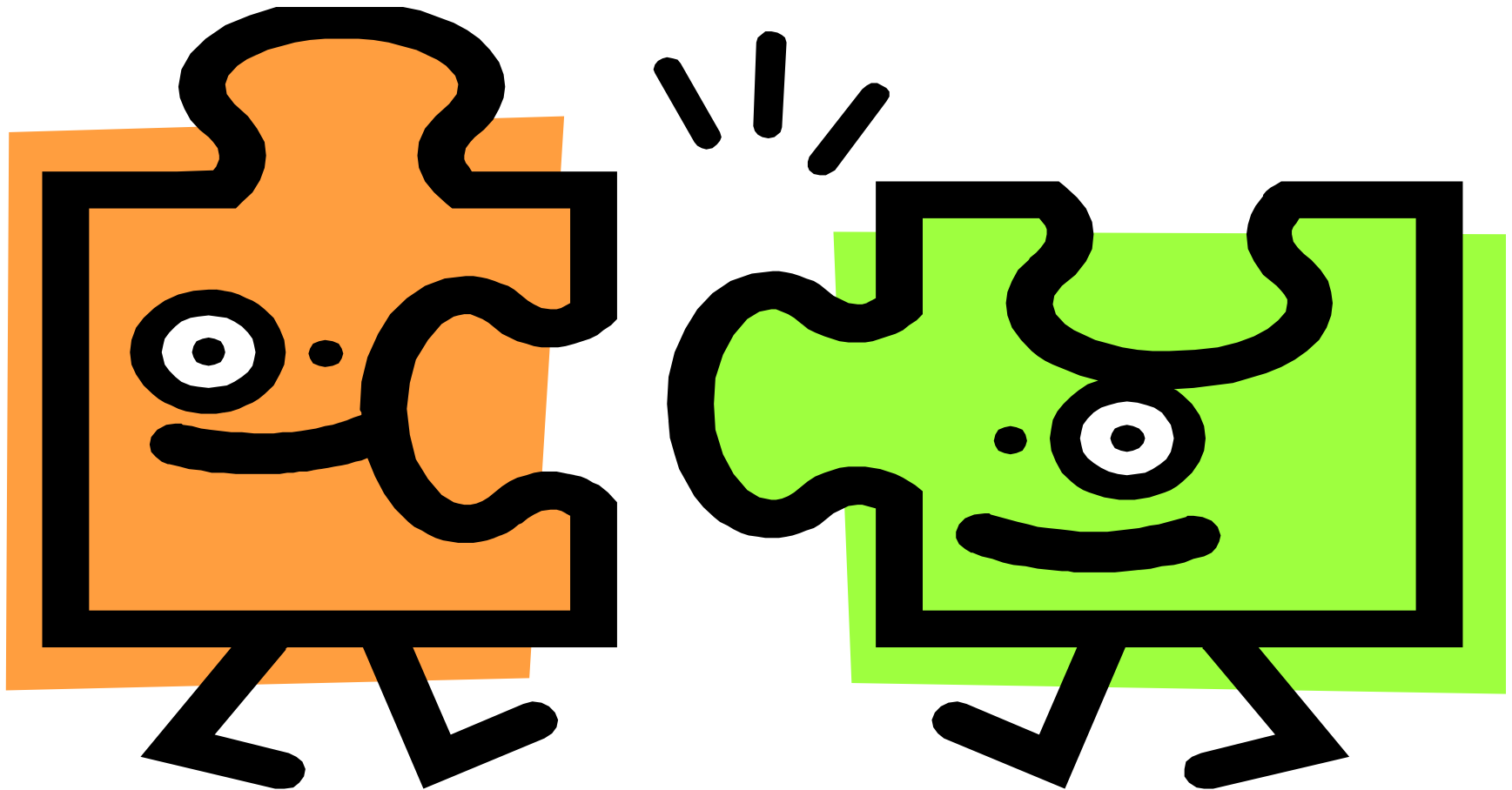
11:20 a.m. – 12 p.m. Lunch Break

12 p.m.-4 p.m.

- ❑ Math Assessment
- ❑ Complete the essay final drafts
- ❑ Complete *Objective* Critical Reading Test
- ❑ Outside Break
- ❑ Begin *Objective* Science Reasoning Test
- ❑ Finish *Objective* Science Reasoning Test



Overview of Components



Math

- This portion of the assessment process is exam based. We test candidates with curriculum based measures taken from Davidson Academy math curricula. We offer two math tracks via performance based ability grouping, and the textbooks that correspond with these two paths are published by Holt and Sullivan. The particular test which a candidate will be given depends upon the minimum level of mathematical competency required for an appropriate placement within the Academy's math trajectory. We offer on-site courses which range from pre-algebra through calculus II, and provide access to University math courses for students who need to proceed beyond this range. Since the goal of assessment is simply to make decisions about admission rather than placement, we only require that students achieve adequate scores to begin with a math course that will allow for appropriate progress toward a timely high school graduation. Academy math exams correspond well with traditional math curricula such that each assessment test is similar to a comprehensive final exam for a rigorous course of that designation.

Objective Critical Reading Test

- This portion of the assessment is very similar to longer reading passage questions and sentence completion exercises that may be found in practice books published for ACT preparation. We utilize reading tests that have been given to various groups of new Academy students during the first few weeks of fall semester and norm our raw score conversions on the curve that has been created from these testing results. We also take age into consideration and adjust all scores to reflect equitable expectations for each given age group. The objective critical reading test utilizes passages from social science, science, and other texts that exemplify the minimum reading comprehension level necessary to begin Academy coursework.

Example of Short Critical Thinking Exercise

- **The text and questions on the next few slides are referred to as the “short critical thinking exercise” in the sample assessment schedule.**



Example Text for Short Critical Thinking Exercise

A parable written by Chuang Tzu, a philosopher of the Chou period.

- *Chuang Tzu was one day fishing, when the Prince of Ch'u sent two high officials to interview him, saying that his Highness would be glad of Chuang Tzu's assistance in the administration of his government. The latter quietly fished on, and without looking around, replied, "I have heard that in the State of Ch'u there is a sacred tortoise, which has been dead three thousand years, and which the prince keeps packed up in a box on the altar in his ancestral shrine. Now do you think the tortoise would rather be dead and have its remains thus honored, or be alive and wagging its tail in the mud?" The two officials answered that no doubt it would rather be alive and wagging its tail in the mud; whereupon Chuang Tzu cried out "Begone! I too elect to remain wagging my tail in the mud."*

Example Questions for Short Critical Thinking Exercise

- *Why does the protagonist change the subject and mention the sacred tortoise? Why doesn't he answer the request directly and immediately? Does it serve a purpose that Chuang Tzu makes the officials answer a question to which he knows the answer?*
- *What does this story tell us about the protagonist Chuang Tzu's personality?*

Additional Measures of Critical Reading, Critical Thinking, Academic Discussion, and Written Expression

The next several slides exemplify the larger “lesson” component of the assessment where students participate in direct instruction, have a whole class discussion, receive multiple forms of feedback, and are given multiple opportunities to improve their work.

The material presented here comes directly from our curriculum & meets our criteria for inclusion on an assessment. The instructions/process you will see are also direct reflections of how we administer this portion of the assessment.

Science Reasoning Test

- ❑ Various scenarios are provided (complete with empirical data) and the student must apply this data to reach correct conclusions and then select correct responses to explain how / why these deductions are correct.
- ❑ This test is literally a measure of (logical deduction) reasoning rather than content knowledge.

Introductory Instructional Remarks

- ❑ Assessment is not like a normal “test.” Tasks are not timed, and on many of them, you may ask for help. There is a lot to do today, so you will need to be focused and work hard, but you may work at your own pace throughout most of the day.
- ❑ There will be a lot to do today and just like in our actual classes, you will get a great deal of feedback to help you improve your work. Using this feedback well will help your assessment score greatly.
- ❑ We are looking at not only your academic skills but also your behavior, attitude, and ability to follow directions. We look for solid effort and the willingness to ask for help—we want you to take responsibility for producing the very best work you are able to generate.

Reading “Come on, Wagon” and Writing First Responses

1. Read “Come on, Wagon”, which can be found here:
http://print.ditd.org/Academy/Come_On_Wagon.pdf
2. Log on to your computer:
 - Log in name and password supplied
3. Open Microsoft Word.
4. Open the folder with your name on it, and then open the file called “1. First Response to ‘Come on, Wagon’.”
5. Respond to the questions as thoughtfully, thoroughly, and clearly as you can.
6. When you are done, save your work and we’ll help you print it.



Discussing the Story

- ❑ You may want to take notes during this discussion. After the discussion, you'll be writing an essay analyzing the characters in the story. Using some of the ideas that come up during the discussion will help you write your essay.
- ❑ Academic discussions are a large component of most Academy classes. Today's discussion is meant to help you think deeply about the story, and it is a chance for you to show us thoughtful reflection. We are looking for active participation: show that you are listening, speak when you have something to add, don't repeat what others have already said, and use ideas from the discussion to help you write a thoughtful essay.



Come on, Wagon!

□ By Zenna Henderson

□ Please refer to the attached Word document to read this story.



□ Also, please note that this story meets all of our criteria for a real assessment except the length. In actual assessments, we tend to use shorter texts to allow students more work time.

Zenna Henderson

- Zenna Henderson was born in 1917, and worked as a teacher in the U.S. and France. She died in 1983.
- Henderson wrote science fiction stories, mainly about "The People," aliens with special abilities who came to Earth when their planet exploded. Her short stories often featured young people and teachers.



First Response Questions

1. Why did Thaddeus “outgrow” his telekinetic abilities? What role did the adult characters play in this “growth”?
2. The following lines from the story form a very clear message:
 - “Every time you teach a kid something, you teach him a hundred things that are impossible because that one thing is so” (1).
 - “Adolescence ends lots more than it begins” (1).
 - “I prayed silently, *Don't let him be too old. O God, don't let him be too old*” (6).

What point is the author making with these statements?

3. Explain the irony in the line near the end of the story when Thaddeus says: “But I can't! You can't just make a tractor do something. You gotta run it.”

More Questions to Consider

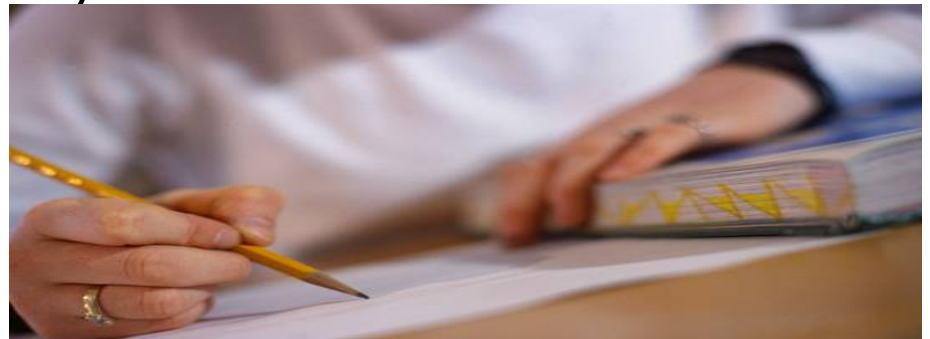
- ❑ Why does the narrator say he doesn't like kids? Does his behavior in the story support that declaration or not?
- ❑ The third paragraph on page three talks about a “side trip to the South Pacific where even I learned that there are some grown-up impossibilities that are not always absolute.” What does this mean and why does it matter?
- ❑ After Clyde's death, the narrator says, “Thaddeus started to bawl, not from grief but bewilderment. He knew I was put out with him, and he didn't know why.” What do you think about this statement? Do you think Thaddeus knew or didn't know what the narrator wanted of him? Why or why not?

Questions Regarding Conformity

1. The characters in “Come on, Wagon” appear to have different ideas about conformity. How do each of the following characters seem to feel about conformity vs. exceptionality:
 - The narrator
 - Jean (the mother)
 - The grandfather
 - Thaddeus when he’s younger
 - Thaddeus when he’s older
2. What do you think was the author’s intention or main message regarding conformity?

Writing an Analysis Essay

- Your essays will need two to four well written, detailed paragraphs...between $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pages single-spaced [*This requirement will vary based on the candidate's degree of academic experience*].
- The next few slides will explain what you need to include in your essay, so you should take notes during this part . . .



Paragraph One

Introduce and summarize the story:

- ❑ Include the title, author, and the most important information needed to understand the tale.
- ❑ A summary is not a line-by-line retelling of the story. To write a summary, explain only the most important parts of the story in order to tell the reader about the story without retelling the whole story itself.
- ❑ On the other hand, make sure you do include all of the important information so the summary is clear and complete.

Paragraph Two

Explain what message this story portrays about conformity:

- ❑ How do the adults in the story feel about conformity? How do you know? Find a section of the text that supports your idea—you may either quote the section directly or you may paraphrase it.
- ❑ How does Thaddeus initially respond to adult expectations of conformity, and why/how do his responses change toward the end of the story? Find a section of the text that supports your ideas—you may either quote the section directly or you may paraphrase it.

Paragraph Three

Explain what message this story portrays about “growing up”:

- The narrator is the main character who reflects on these differences. What is his core belief about this? How do you know? Find a section of the text that supports your idea—you may either quote the section directly or you may paraphrase it.

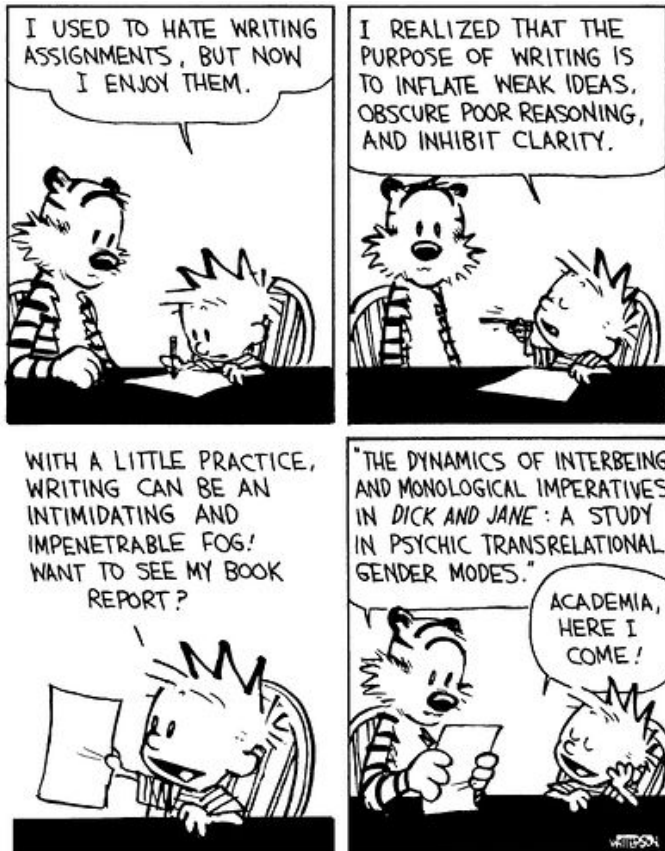
Paragraph Four

Conclusions:

- ❑ What was the author, Zenna Henderson trying to show or teach? How do you know?
- ❑ Do you think she had a goal in mind? Does she want her readers to change their behavior in some way?
- ❑ How does the ironic twist in the story's ending clarify the author's message?

When you're done writing . . .

Go back through your essay and read it over making sure that:



- all your sentences make sense
- your word choice is interesting and accurate
- you have transitions between ideas and paragraphs
- you've used correct punctuation and grammar
- you've explained all your ideas thoughtfully and thoroughly

Now, go ahead and . . .

1. Log on to your laptops.
2. Open a new file in Microsoft Word.
3. Put your name on the page and title the document “Wagon Essay.”
4. Save the file in your folder. Name it: “Wagon Essay.”

Ask for help with any of this if you need it.

Summary of Wagon Essay

1. Introduce and summarize the story.
2. Explain what message this story portrays about conformity.
3. Explain what message this story portrays about “growing up.”
4. Draw conclusions about what Zenna Henderson was trying to teach, what her goals were, and how the ironic twist at the end clarifies her message.



For additional information please visit our public site:
http://www.davidsonacademy.unr.edu/?NavID=11_0

The information located under the “academics” tab may be particularly useful for families who are pondering the assessment process.