



2017 TN Spring

Anchor Set

**Grade 8**

**Explanatory Essay**

Brain Development

Read the passages and write a response to the writing task.

## Passage 1 Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain

by Jennifer Connor-Smith

- 1 Remember when you could pick your nose in public or run outside in your underpants without a second thought? These days, you flood with embarrassment if your dad sings in front of your friends or you drop a tray in the cafeteria.
- 2 What changed? Not the rules about nose picking or your father’s singing voice, but your brain.

### It’s All in Your Head

- 3 Sometime during middle school, changes in brain activity transform how we see the world. Spending time with other kids becomes a top priority. Hormones power up the brain’s reward system, making hanging out with friends more fun than ever before. But these changes come with a down side. Fitting in becomes essential. Threat-detection systems focus on what other people think and scan for any hints of disapproval. Hormones push the brain’s shame and self-consciousness systems into overdrive.
- 4 Because of these brain changes, teens start reacting more strongly to social problems. Scientists don’t know this *just* from surviving middle school—they have evidence from laboratory research. During a challenge like giving a speech, teens release more stress hormones and have higher blood pressure than kids or adults. Teens don’t even have to tackle a challenge to feel stressed. Even being watched over a video monitor makes teens sweat more than adults.

### Words Do Hurt Like Sticks and Stones

- 5 Why do we use pain words, like “hurt feelings” and “broken hearted,” to talk about problems with other people? Maybe because our brains react to physical pain and social rejection in the same way. Psychologists explore this connection between physical and social pain by measuring brain activity while people play a computer game called Cyberball.
- 6 In Cyberball, research participants play a game of catch online with two other players. At least, that’s what they believe is happening. In reality, the other “players” are fake, just part of the game’s programming. The game starts fair, with the players programmed to share the ball with the research

participant. Then, with no warning, the players start throwing the ball only to each other, leaving the research participant out completely.

- 7** No big surprise—teens in these Cyberball experiments feel sad and rejected. The surprising part? Rejection activates the same brain systems that physical pain triggers. Brain scans show that rejection fires up the “Ow!” part of our brain that makes pain upsetting. Without this pain-response system, we would recognize physical pain, but it wouldn’t bother us. This physical pain system also responds to many kinds of social pain, like thinking about a breakup or being called boring.
- 8** Some people have especially reactive pain-response systems. A stronger “Ow!” brain response in the lab translates to people feeling more rejected, self-conscious, and sad in real life. Differences in pain-system reactivity may help explain why rejection hurts teenagers more than young kids. In Cyberball experiments comparing children to teens, teens activate brain systems related to pain and sadness more strongly.

### **Embarrassment Has an Unfair Advantage**

- 9** Our thoughts and feelings depend on the balance between many different brain systems. Activity in one system can amplify or cancel out activity in another. Because our brains take more than two decades to develop, some brain systems come online sooner than others. Unfortunately, the systems that trigger embarrassment and fear of rejection fire up years before the systems that tame bad feelings.
- 10** Imagine a tug-of-war with fear of rejection, the desire to fit in, and self-consciousness all pulling on the same side. With nothing pulling against them, they easily drag in all sorts of bad feelings. This imbalance means even small problems, like tripping in the hallway, can trigger a wave of embarrassment.
- 11** Brain scans reveal that adults unleash a powerful defender to pull the brain back into balance. Adult brains quickly fire up systems to soothe anxiety and generate positive thoughts. These systems help balance out concern about what other people think, so adults feel less hurt and embarrassed by rejection.
- 12** Wouldn’t it be better if we could just turn off hurt feelings, embarrassment, and the desire to fit in? Probably not. Before modern society, people needed to belong to a group to survive. Without a group, people couldn’t find enough food or protect themselves. Fear of rejection forced people to behave well enough for the community to keep them around.
- 13** Our lives don’t depend on social acceptance anymore, but social pain is still helpful. Fear of rejection pulls on the right side in the tug-of-war against mean

or selfish behavior. Shame punishes us for lying or cheating, even if we don't get caught. Social pain hurts, but it also makes us nicer. Brain scans show that teens with strong pain-response systems give more support to other kids.

- 14** Unfortunately, knowing the benefits of social pain won't save you from a flash of humiliation when your mom reminds you to take a "potty break" in front of your friends. But you can take comfort in reminding yourself that the pain makes you a better person. Maybe even one less likely to embarrass your own kids someday.

"Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain" by Jennifer Connor-Smith, from *Odyssey* magazine. Published by Carus Publishing Company. Copyright © 2015 by Cricket Media.

## **Passage 2**

### **Use It or Lose It: A good brain pruning**

by Laura K. Zimmermann

- 15** WARNING! As you read this, parts of your brain are disappearing. On the plus side, other parts of your brain, like the ones you are using to read this, are getting stronger. It's a competition for survival, and the main players are neurons. Neurons are brain cells that process information by communicating with other neurons. Many have branches like a tree, with shorter "tree-top" branches that receive messages and a long branch, the "tree trunk," that sends them. Whenever you experience something, neurons start sending messages to each other. Different experiences activate connections between different neurons, creating networks. And it is these networks that are responsible for what we sense, think, feel, and do. Or more precisely, networks whose connections survive are responsible. Other connections disappear.

#### **Brutal but Necessary**

- 16** When we are young we have way more connections between our neurons than we need. These extra connections are there, ready to be used to build networks for the things we experience. And if you experience the same things over and over, like when you practice doing math problems, playing an instrument, or your backhand swing in tennis, the stronger the networks related to these skills become. Over time the connections between the neurons we use more frequently are kept and the others are pruned away, much like the pruning of a tree. It's a dog-eat-dog world up there in your brain—you use it or you lose it.
- 17** But brutal though it may be, the pruning process is important too, because pruning allows your brain to become increasingly more specialized so that you

are better at the skills and information you use. Look at it this way: Is it more important to be able to distinguish the sounds of every language in the world, or to learn the language your family and friends use? Because as a newborn you actually could perceive all of the world's language sounds, but that ability was pruned away long ago when you began to specialize in the languages used by the people around you.

### Pruning the Teen Brain

- 18** Researchers used to think the pruning process slowed down after early childhood. They were wrong. Extra connections continue forming in different parts of the brain through the early teen years, with a second major pruning of these connections in later adolescence. So what does this mean for the teen brain? It is likely that, as in childhood, the extra connections set the stage for the pruning process that helps our brain become more efficient at processing the information we take in. But there are still many questions. For example, does having extra connections available help teens pick up new information and skills more easily? Are there times in adolescence when some things are easier to learn than others? There is still much to discover about what a good brain pruning in the teen years can do.

"Use It or Lose It" by Laura K. Zimmermann, from *Odyssey* magazine. Published by Carus Publishing Company. Copyright © 2015 by Cricket Media.

## **Writing Task 2**

Each text discusses a different relationship between behavior and the brain. Write an essay explaining these relationships and how they are different from each other. Develop your essay by providing clear details and relevant evidence from **both** passages.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- Plan your essay
- Write your essay

Your written response should be in the form of a multi-paragraph essay. Spend about 90 minutes on this essay, including the time you spend reading the passage(s), planning, and writing your essay.

**Write your response to Writing Task 2 in the space provided in your answer document.**



***End of English Language Arts, Part I, Subtest 2***

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## Anchor Paper 1

### WRITING TASK 2

Embarrassment and brain pruning are brain functions that have many differences. Embarrassment is especially common in teens, it is caused by hormones, and the reaction is similar to physical pain. On the other hand, brain pruning occurs all throughout the human lifetime, it is caused by the repetition of a skill, and reacts by building neuron connections. Major differences between embarrassment and brain pruning are the ages at which each occur, the causes for these behaviors, and the reaction that takes place in the brain.

Age differentiates the behaviors of the brain during embarrassment and brain pruning. It is proven that teens react more strongly to embarrassment. "During a challenge like giving a speech, teens release more stress hormones and have higher blood pressure than kids or adults" (Connor-Smith, Paragraph 4). This solidifies the fact that teens are much more likely to have a strong reaction to stress and embarrassment. They acquire more awareness of their peers' opinions and focus on earning their approval; however, it is quite the opposite for brain pruning since it is not caused by hormones and does not directly relate to stress or embarrassment, it occurs all throughout peoples' lifetimes. "Researchers

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## WRITING TASK 2

used to think the pruning process slowed down after early childhood. They were wrong (Zimmermann Paragraph 18). This is a major difference because the ages are wildly dissimilar. For pruning, it appears in every stage of life. On the contrary, extreme embarrassment is most common in teen years.

Additionally, the cause for embarrassment is unique from brain pruning. Embarrassment is primarily caused by hormones while brain pruning is caused by the repetition of a skill or activity. "Hormones push the brain's shame and self-consciousness systems into overdrive" (Connor-Smith, Paragraph 3). Hormones directly affect embarrassment and its intensity. Conversely, hormones have no affect on brain pruning and instead practice is the main cause. "Over time the connections between the neurons we use more frequently are kept and the others are pruned away... you use it or you lose it" (Zimmermann Paragraph 16). Practice builds connections in the brain and gets rid of or weakens neurons that aren't primal. This is different from the hormones that cause variation in stress levels, because it is only affected by the amount of repetition and time one spends

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## WRITING TASK 2

in which they are susceptible to that skill.

Lastly, the scientific reaction that takes place in the brain varies between embarrassment and brain pruning. During embarrassment or stress, scientists have observed patients that show signs of physical pain. "Rejection activates the same brain systems that physical pain triggers" (Connor-Smith, Paragraph 7). This pain reaction is why people with especially reactive pain-response systems tend to be more emotional and more easily embarrassed. This reaction is entirely different from the reaction that takes place during brain pruning which is the strengthening of neuron connections. "Whenever you experience something, neurons start sending messages to each other. Different experiences activate connections between different neurons, creating networks" (Zimmerman, Paragraph 15). This is a different reaction because it builds and strengthens neuron connections that are especially stimulated while forgetting relatively dormant ones. On the other hand, the pain reaction the brain receives is most often because of an embarrassing, unusual experience. These two reactions are entirely

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WRITING TASK 2

dissimilar because one is a response related to physical pain and the other is a reaction only related to the neurological connections that take place to help humans learn and strengthen skills.

Embarrassment and brain pruning are two life-enhancing brain relationships that are very unique unto themselves. Embarrassment is more likely in teens while brain pruning occurs at all ages. Embarrassment and stress are results of hormones and cause a physical pain reaction. Conversely, brain pruning is a result of repetition and causes construction and strengthening of neuron connections. The differences between brain pruning and embarrassment range from age, cause, and neurological reaction.

## **Development: 4**

Well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient evidence from the passage is used to respond to the task and very insightfully develop the topic. The response thoroughly and accurately explains and elaborates on the evidence provided, demonstrating a clear understanding of the topic.

## **Focus & Organization: 4**

An effective and relevant introduction and conclusion. Effectively clarifies relationships among ideas and concepts to create cohesion. Exceptional organization to create a unified whole — instead of responding to the task by discussing the passages and their differences sequentially, the response uses *age*, *causes*, and *neurological reactions* to describe the relationship between behavior and the brain.

## **Language: 4**

Consistent and very sophisticated command of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary (*repetition of a skill; peers' opinions; life-enhancing*). The response illustrates a very sophisticated command of syntactic variety (... *are the ages at which each occur; This is a major difference because the ages are wildly dissimilar; ... strengthens neuron connections that are especially stimulated while forgetting relatively dormant ones*) that maintains reader interest. Utilizes sophisticated and varied transitions; effectively establishes and maintains a formal style.

## **Conventions: 4**

The response demonstrates a consistent and very sophisticated command of grade-level conventions, including very strong punctuation throughout. A few minor errors in spelling (*embarassment, Conversly*) and usage (*unique; susceptible*) do not interfere with meaning.

## Anchor Paper 2

### WRITING TASK 2

The human brain is a mystery to the ordinary person, but many scientists study its activity and have discovered interesting things within it. The articles "Embarrassed? Blame your brain" by Jennifer Connor-Smith and "Use It or Lose It: A good brain pruning" by Laura K. Zimmerman both explain how parts of the brain work and why people respond the way they do. Connor-Smith elaborates on the brain affecting teens' social life, and Zimmerman explains how the brain works throughout one's life, but both focus on the human mind.

In "Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain", Connor-Smith informs the reader on why social life is so important to teens due to not wanting to feel rejected. "Scientists don't just know this from surviving middle school—they have evidence from laboratory research." (Connor-Smith, Paragraph 4). Scientists who study the brain have come to the conclusion that rejection triggers physical pain. Connor-Smith presents this information and then goes on to organize her article into advantages and disadvantages of the problem caused by becoming embarrassed. She goes on to explain to the reader how the feelings people may not like to have help them survive and bond with other people they are around. Having hurt feelings or a broken heart from being rejected causes pain, but ultimately that pain is just the human brain's reaction or memory of something that upsets a person.

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## WRITING TASK 2

Laura K. Zimmerman also explains how the brain works, but instead of focusing on teens' social life and hurt feelings she explains how the human mind becomes pruned due to what one practices in their daily life. "Use It or Lose It: A good brain pruning" is all about the neuron particles in the brain continually working to maintain one's abilities. "If you experience the same things over and over, like when you practice doing math problems, playing an instrument, or your backhand swing in tennis, the stronger the networks related to these skills become" (Zimmerman Paragraph 16). Instead of basing her article off of one time period in a person's life like Connor-Smith did, Zimmerman chose to elaborate on how the brain works throughout a person's entire life, how the neurons play a part in that, and how the whole brain essentially becomes "pruned";

Both authors, however, use information on the teen mind and how certain aspects of it are beneficial. Zimmerman explains her research on it under the subheading "Pruning the Teen Brain." She uses the previous information presented in the article to relate it to teens minds too. Connor-Smith does the same under "Embarrassment Has an Unfair Advantage."; however, her entire article is organized to inform the reader on the

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**WRITING TASK 2**

mind of teens, where Zimmerman's is about every age.

The two informative articles are over a similar topic, but their purpose varies. "Embarrassed? Blame your brain" is meant to tell the reader how teens' emotions can be beneficial but difficult. "Use It or Lose It: A good brain pruning" is also about the functions of the mind, but its purpose is to explain to the reader how neurons can be lost when people do not use them often enough. Both authors wrote about the human brain, but each article is meant for separate audiences.

## **Development: 4**

The response utilizes well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient evidence from the passage to insightfully develop the topic. It very thoroughly and accurately explains and elaborates on the evidence provided, demonstrating a clear understanding of the task, topic, and stimuli by effectively contrasting elements of the two passages.

## **Focus & Organization: 4**

The response contains an effective and relevant introduction. Organizational strategies are used to create a unified whole, and there is elaboration on a key element late in the essay that both passages share (*Both authors ... use information on the teen mind ...*). Very focused throughout, clarifies the relationships among ideas and concepts to augment cohesion. The conclusion, while relevant, does not reach the level of the rest of the response in this area.

## **Language: 4**

Diverse word-choices illustrate a consistent and sophisticated command of language, vocabulary, and syntactic variety (*Having hurt feelings or a broken heart from being rejected causes pain, but ultimately that pain is just the human brain's reaction ... ; ... how certain aspects of it are beneficial*). This adds meaning and maintains reader interest. Effectively establishes and maintains a formal style, using sophisticated and varied transitions (*Scientists who study the brain have come to the conclusion ... ; ... , but instead of focusing on teens' social life and hurt feelings ... ; The two informative articles are over a similar topic, but their purpose varies*).

## **Conventions: 4**

Consistent and sophisticated command of conventions. Strong sentence structures with correct punctuation; uses parenthetical citations correctly. A few various minor errors do not interfere with the response's meaning.

Anchor Paper 3

WRITING TASK 2

The human brain changing influences changes and specializations in behavior. In "Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain" by Jennifer Connor-Smith, and "Use It or Lose It: A Good Brain Pruning" by Laura Zimmerman, explanations are given about changing behavior in young teens and kids. Even though the general topics similar in these two articles, there are big differences in what portions of behavior the passages focus on. While Connor-Smith's article talks about emotional changes in teenagers, Zimmerman's in focus us as to why young children and people in their early teens can adapt and learn so easily.

Connor-Smith's passage attempts to explain to readers why that even though small children are emotionally carefree, teens are often more self-conscious and emotionally fragile. Information was found that predating "Modern Society, people needed to belong to a group to survive" (Connor-Smith 63-64). This means that when someone would need to start working and helping the group of that time, in early teenage years - they needed to fit in and be liked, so humans evolved to develop a higher fear of being rejected; however, we do not need to be socially accepted to live in modern times, but it still helps us to refrain from misbehaving. Changing of the brain does affect behaviors as shown by Connor-Smith's article.

Similarly, Zimmerman's article also accomplishes this task, but dissimilarly, Zimmerman shows this by informing her readers about how humans specialize in certain activities. Zimmerman conveys, in lines 16-18, that the more "you experience



## WRITING TASK 2

the same things over and over, ... the stronger the networks related to these skills become." Stating it colloquially, the more one uses certain neurons, the stronger they are. Additionally, if one does not use certain connections between neurons, they disappear. When humans are born, they have more connections between neurons than they need. As they practice certain things, such as their native languages or walking, those connections become fortified. Other connections, for instance, connections that would help one learn a foreign language, become weaker and eventually disappear entirely. According to Zimmerman, neurologists have discovered that in early teenage years, humans acquire a plethora of neuron connections. These prepare teens for new experiences that they would not need whatsoever as a baby or young child. This article by Zimmerman, even though it deals with the brain affecting behavior as well, is quite different from Connor-Smith's.

One article explains about specialization of certain tasks made easier by excess connections amongst neurons, while simultaneously, the other goes into depth about information concerning the hypersensitivity to rejection people acquire as teenagers. As Connor-Smith is telling readers about pathetic emotions and informing them that "changes in brain activity transform how we see the world," Zimmerman talks about how if people use neurons connections, they are strengthened, and if people do not use the connections, they vanish (Connor-Smith 8-9). Differences are

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**WRITING TASK 2**

specific and blatantly obvious, while similarities are more subtle, and they are general topics.

In conclusion, even though general similarities between the two articles are present, there are more major, specific differences in how Connor-Smith and Zimmerman inform their readers about changes in behavior based upon changes in the brain. One speaks of how teens become more shameful and self-conscious, while the other relays information to her readers concerning why young kids and children who are in their early teens learn and adapt more easily than their elders.

## **Development: 4**

Utilizes well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient evidence from the passage to insightfully develop the topic. The response thoroughly and accurately explains and elaborates on the evidence provided, demonstrating a clear understanding of the topic and stimuli (... *about emotional changes in teenagers ... why young children and people in their early teens can adapt and learn so easily*).

## **Focus & Organization: 4**

A strong introduction increases the effectiveness of the organizational strategy and creates a unified whole that increases the comprehension of the response. Relationships among ideas and concepts are effectively clarified, with the exception of the reference to accomplishing the task in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph (what task?); and the discussion about *differences and similarities* prior to the conclusion. A relevant conclusion is present.

## **Language: 4**

The response illustrates consistent and sophisticated command of precise language and vocabulary (... *we do not need to be socially accepted to live in modern times, but it still helps us to refrain from misbehaving; ... the other goes into depth concerning the hypersensitivity to rejection people acquire as teenagers; As they practice certain things, such as their native languages or walking, those connections become fortified*). The use of sophisticated syntactic variety and varied transitional phrases ( *Even though; Similarly ... but dissimilarly, ... ; One article explains ... while simultaneously, the other ...*) enhance meaning and maintain reader interest. Successfully establishes and maintains a formal style.

## **Conventions: 4**

The response demonstrates relatively consistent and sophisticated command of grade-level conventions. It utilizes ellipses and dashes correctly. A few various and minor errors – such as its occasional forced use of vocabulary (*betwixt*), a misuse of a semi-colon, and spelling (*attempts, self-concious, colloquially*) do not significantly interfere with meaning.

## Anchor Paper 4

### WRITING TASK 2

#### Plan Your Essay

Prompt: Write an essay explaining the relationship between behavior and the brain.

#### Passage 1

- Sometime during middle school, changes in brain activity transform how we see the world

- due to these brain changes, teens start reacting more strongly to social problems.

- Some people have especially reactive pain-response systems

- Our feelings depend on the balance between different brain systems.

#### Both

both includes that the brain is very powerful.

Paragraph I: Intro  
Paragraph II: Passage  
Paragraph III: Passage?  
Paragraph IV: How both paragraphs compare and contrast

Paragraph V:  
The Conclusion

#### Passage 2

- When we are young, we have way more connections between

our neurons that we need, that means the brain is really.

- It's brutal, but the pruning makes the brain

specialized.  
- There is still much to discover about what a good brain pruning in the teen years can do.

## WRITING TASK 2

"Ow!" says the brain as it gets hit with humiliation and rejection. Some people say the brain produces an embarrassing outlook on certain situations, and others believe that the brain should be set up this way for a good pruning. Well, as I read some great passages today, I started reflecting a little more on how people envision the brain. These passages really spoke to me. Let me elaborate.

In the publication of *Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain*, author Jennifer Connor-Smith makes it obvious that the brain isn't a great tool when talking about teens. Even though the brain produces a great amount of logically developed sets, it doesn't help with teens being rejected, because of peer pressure. This is what Connor-Smith expresses through her publication. Connor-Smith stated that "Sometime during middle school, changes in brain activity transform how we see the world. Due to these brain changes, teens start reacting more to social problems. This can lead to way more trouble, especially to the people with reactive pain-response systems."

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WRITING TASK 2

Basically, Conner is trying to express the simple fact that our feelings depend on the balance between different brain systems.

On the other hand, author Laura K. Zimmerman with the publication *Use it or Lose It: A good brain pruning*, obviously doesn't agree with Conner-Smith. Zimmerman states that when we are young, way more connections between our neurons than we need. Zimmerman believes that's good because we will more than likely be recycling. Zimmerman states, "Pruning is brutal, but necessary, in order for the brain to be specialized." As you can see, Zimmerman believes the brain is great!

Even though both authors don't agree with each other, it is clear to see that they agree upon 4 things. They both take many stances on one point. Do you know? They both agree that the brain is a very powerful object. They express that a numerous amount of times.

In conclusion, we can see that both authors have a great

**WRITING TASK 2**

belief of their stance. Connor-Smith  
sees the brain as a natural evil.  
Zimmerman sees the brain as a  
great natural superhero. Both authors  
understand the brain is very powerful.  
We can all see there are many  
relations between behavior and  
brain.

### **Development: 3**

As the detailed introduction would suggest, the response is very attentive to the task (*Prompt: Write an essay explaining the relationship between behavior and the brain*) and helps demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the topic and stimuli. Relevant and sufficient evidence is used to adequately develop the topic.

### **Focus & Organization: 3**

An organizational strategy is used to create a mostly unified whole and aid in comprehension. Clarifies most ideas between ideas and concepts, although the assertion late in the response that the two authors *don't agree with each other* creates a gap in cohesion. In addition to the intro, the response has a relevant conclusion.

### **Language: 3**

Uses and displays consistent command of precise language, vocabulary, syntactic variety, and transitions appropriate to the task, but short of sophisticated. The response has difficulty maintaining a formal style (*I read some great passages today; the use of way more; They both take many stances on one point. Do you know?*).

### **Conventions: 3**

The response demonstrates consistent command of grade-level conventions. Generally good control of capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. A few various errors do not interfere with meaning.



## Anchor Paper 5

### WRITING TASK 2

The brain is a tricky subject. Things start to change in middle school. People act different, boys and girls who use to be your best friends are no long speaking to you. You may ask why is this.

Well, have you ever dropped your tray in the cafeteria? I'm sure all of us have, but why is it we turn red, get mad, or even cry. That's probably because your brain systems are unbalanced. Your brain systems don't all show up at the same time. Which means your emotions are messed up as a teenager because all these new systems are showing up and your brain can't handle it all.

Have you ever been called fat or ugly? Did you cry, get mad, or just felt unloved. This is due to the fact that our brains react to physical pain and social pain the same. Our brain has a system called the pain-response system. People with stronger pain response systems are the kids who feel more rejected, self-conscious and sad all the time.

A great way to think of the brain is to think of a tree. Our brain has cells called neurons. These neurons send messages to one another all through our brain. They are responsible for our sense, the way we think, and the way we feel. Without them we would be nothing, but these connections can be good and bad. Some we will use everyday. Others we want so they are thrown out.

Our brain is complicated and confusing. We learn something new about the brain everyday

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### **Development: 3**

The response doesn't use very much quoted text evidence, but the elaboration on what is presented shows that the task was understood and the topic is adequately developed. A sufficient understanding of the topic is demonstrated by the accurate explanation of the evidence.

### **Focus & Organization: 3**

An adequate organizational strategy is used with a relevant introduction, relevant conclusion, and three distinct body paragraphs to create a unified whole. The response may have a gap of cohesion as it is not necessarily clear if the question posed in the intro is ever answered (... *your best friends are no long speaking to you. You may ask why is this*).

### **Language: 3**

A good variety of sentence structures are used, as well as domain-specific vocabulary and transitions (*Have you ever; A great way to; Without them*). The response's tone isn't overly formal, but it can be considered a stylistic choice. enough to be proficient. Low 3.

### **Conventions: 3**

Consistent command of grade-level conventions is demonstrated but short of sophisticated. A few grammar errors are present, along with the occasional spelling error (*brian, responisble, confussing*) and some missing commas and apostrophes. However, the response does show good control of end punctuation, and the errors do not significantly interfere with meaning.

## Anchor Paper 6

### WRITING TASK 2

The brain can do so many tasks and perform them admirably. Behavior and the brain are discussed in the passages "Embarrassed? Blame your brain" by Jennifer Connor-Smith and "Use it or Lose it: A good brain pruning" by Laura K Zimmerman. Though their topic is the same, each passage talks about a completely different idea.

In the passage "Embarrassed? Blame your brain" by Jennifer Connor-Smith, she describes the changes the brain goes through when entering teenage years. Connor-Smith depicts these changes by stating "Threat-detection systems focus on what other people think and scan for any hints of disapproval. Hormones push the brain's shame and self-consciousness systems into overdrive." She also describes an experiment in which teens played a computer game called Cyberball. Cyberball basically excluded teens playing from the activity inside the game. The result was "teens in these Cyberball experiments feel sad and rejected." The essay goes on to talk about how embarrassment can overpower our brain systems, giving it an unfair advantage.

On the other hand in the passage "Use it or Lose it: A good brain pruning" by Laura K Zimmermann, she illustrates the importance of the pruning process and neurons. Zimmermann describes the pruning process by explaining "pruning allows your brain to become

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WRITING TASK 2

increasingly more specialized so that you are better at the skills and information you use." Earlier in the passage, she also says that in the competition for survival, neurons are the main players.

Though these passages are similar a way, they are also quite different. They are different in that Connor-Smith connects to embarrassment and how the brain systems react to it. While, Zimmermann illustrates the importance of neurons in the competition for survival. Also, Connor-Smith backs up her reasoning/thesis with the Cyberball experiment, and Zimmermann backs up her thesis by describing the pruning process. Lastly, Connor-Smith gives examples as to how our fears have an unfair advantage in our brain systems. On the other hand, Zimmermann gives reasoning to how the brain becomes more efficient as humans continue to grow older.

The relationship between our brain and its behaviors are amazing and complex. And it only grows to become more complex. To understand this, Jennifer Connor-Smith and Laura K Zimmermann provide their readers with two different standpoints on the brain's behaviors.

### **Development: 3**

The response uses relevant and sufficient evidence to adequately develop the topic. It explains and elaborates on the evidence adequately, but tenuously at times (e.g., neurons are never described). Demonstrates a sufficient understanding of the topic and stimuli.

### **Focus & Organization: 3**

Both the introduction and conclusion are relevant. The responses utilizes adequate organizational strategies to create a mostly unified whole which aids comprehension. Most relationships are clarified, but the last body paragraph is devoted to giving a summary of the passages, creating a gap in cohesion if not a lapse of focus.

### **Language: 3**

Relatively consistent command of precise language and vocabulary. Consistent command of syntactic variety is shown. Uses some appropriate and varied transitional words and phrases, including those within paragraphs (*Though their topic is the same ...; The essay goes on to to talk about ...Earlier in the passage ...*); succeeds in establishing and maintaining a formal style.

### **Conventions: 3**

The response demonstrates consistent command of grade-level conventions. Some minor errors (e.g., in usage – *depicts, connects*) do not significantly interfere with meaning.

## Anchor Paper 7

### WRITING TASK 2

The first relationship between behavior and the brain is mentioned in the first passage, "Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain", this passage mainly talks about embarrassment, rejection, social pain, and how your brain makes you feel about ten times more embarrassed. The reason you could pick your nose and not be embarrassed when you were little is because sometime during middle school there begins to be changes in brain activity. These changes transform how we see the world. These changes also make fitting in essential. Threat-detection systems focus on what other people think and scan for any hints of disapproval. Hormones push the brain's shame and self-consciousness systems into overdrive. Our thoughts and feelings depend on the balance between many different brain systems.

Passage two, "Use it or lose it: A good brain pruning", focuses on neurons and what they do. It also mentions how we are losing parts of our brain everyday. Neurons are brain cells that process information by communicating with other neurons. Whenever you experience something, neurons start sending messages to each other. When we are young we have way more connections between our neurons than we need. Over time the connections between the neurons we use more frequently are kept and the others are pruned away. Researchers used to think the pruning process slowed down after early childhood. Well, they were wrong. Extra connections continue

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**WRITING TASK 2**

to form in different parts of our brain through the early teen years.

These relationships are different because they both do different things, and send different types of signals to our brain. They are also different because one sends communication signals, and the other is what causes us to feel a certain feeling such as embarrassment, the feeling of being rejected, and the feeling of shame after being caught lying or cheating.



## **Development: 2**

The response uses mostly relevant evidence to partially develop the topic, but it is heavily reliant on copied text. Some of the evidence is explained adequately to demonstrate a partial understanding of the topic and stimuli.

## **Focus & Organization: 2**

There is no introduction. A concluding section, such as it is, about the different relationships between brain and behavior (*These relationships are different because they both do different things, and send different types of signals to our brain*) addresses the task, while creating some unification and clarifying some relationships of the response's ideas.

## **Language: 2**

Somewhat inconsistent command of precise language, vocabulary, and syntactic variety is illustrated for the original writing attempted. Basic transitional words and phrases are repetitively used (*The, These*). Formal style.

## **Conventions: 2**

The response demonstrates inconsistent command of conventions just short of grade-level for the original writing not copied or edited from the text, which hinders it. A few errors minor in nature are present.

## Anchor Paper 8

### WRITING TASK 2

After reading the two passages, "Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain," by Jennifer Connor-Smith and, "Use It or Lose It; A good brain pruning," by Laura K. Zimmermann I will an essay that discusses a different relationship between behavior and the brain. I will develop my essay by providing clear details and relevant evidence from both passages. In my essay I will give two main points from the two passages.

My first main point is talking about how your brain reacts to things. In the "Embarrassed? Blame Your Brain," by Jennifer, it states, "During a challenge like giving a speech, teens release more stress hormones and have higher blood pressure than kids or adults!" This means that your brain starts reacting more strongly to social problems when you are a teen. As a kid "crowd doesn't affect you, but as you get older the more mehore you become and might mess up. Connor-Smith also states, "Why do we use pain words, like "hurt feelings" and "broken hearts", to talk about problems with other people? Make because our brains react to physical pain and social rejection in the same way!" This means that as a teen rejection is a lot, because that could mean you don't fit in.

**WRITING TASK 2**

My second main point is talking about brutal but necessary problems. In the passage, "Use It or Lose It", by Laura K. Zimmermann, it points, "When we are young we have way more connections between our neurons than we do", this mean that when we are young we can control our neurons way better.

Zimmermann also states, "over time the connections between the neurons we use more frequently are kept and others are pruned away". What Zimmermann is trying to say is that over time we lose control over our neurons.

In conclusion, what both passage covered way the way your brain works. The passage by Connor-Smith tells more about how our lose control of our brains the passage by Zimmermann it tells more about how our neurons go from kids-to teen-to adults. In my essay I have provided clear details and relevant evidence from both passages to tell the difference relationship between behavior and the brain from both passages.

## **Development: 2**

The response utilizes mostly relevant but insufficient evidence to partially develop the topic, and falls short in responding to the task (... *I will give two main points from the two passages ... talking about how your brain reacts to things ... talking about brutal but necessary problems*) The explanation of some of the evidence demonstrates a partial understanding of the topic, with some level of inaccuracy (*This mean that when we are young we can control our neurons way better*).

## **Focus & Organization: 2**

Because of space wasted reviewing the instructions from the writing task, the response contains both a limited – bordering on irrelevant – introduction and conclusion. The organizational strategy attempted using *My first* and *second main points* does create some degree of unification and helps comprehension. Still, the ideas and evidence are presented in a way that seems random and/or sequential, suggesting a lapse in focus.

## **Language: 2**

Inconsistent command of what little precise language is attempted. Inconsistent command of vocabulary and syntactic variety. The response utilizes some rather basic and repetitive transitional words and phrases (*I will; also states; tells more about*) to help establish a formal style, despite the use of *way more* and *way better*.

## **Conventions: 2**

Very inconsistent command of grade-level conventions is demonstrated. The response contains numerous errors in sentence structure and grammar (*I will an essay; as you get older they more; as a teen rejection is a lot, because that could mean; we lose control more our neurons; covered way the way*) and spelling (*reactes, meas, croud, meture, migh, mabe*) that significantly interfere with meaning.

## Anchor Paper 9

### WRITING TASK 2

Our brain is the most important organ in our body. It triggers our emotions, circulates brain cells and our motions of movement. "Use it or lose it: A good brain pruning," by Laura K. Zimmerman, is about parts of your brain that disappear and make new.

"Embarrassed? Blame your brain," by Jennifer Connor-Smith, is about how your brain changes or develops overtime as well as your emotions.

In these two articles, they both talk about some of the main parts and muscles in our brain. These two articles differ from there story line. "Use it or Lose it," is mainly about making sure you use all of the cells, muscles, and characteristics in our brain as much as we can before they disappear. "Embarrassed?" is about how your kid brain develops, forms, or develops into a new teenage brain that is different from an kids or adults brain.

## **Development: 2**

Although it is not apparent if the task was fully grasped, the response exhibits relevant evidence showing that both passages were read. Explains some of the evidence provided, demonstrating only a partial understanding of the topic and stimuli. Some level of inaccuracy with the two references to *muscles*.

## **Focus & Organization: 2**

A limited introduction is present, but no conclusion. Clarifies some relationships among ideas, but generally not well (*is about parts of your brain that disappear and make new*) to create lapses. The response demonstrates organization with the intro followed by a body paragraph, which allow the ideas and passages to be differentiated and creates some unification.

## **Language: 2**

The response lacks precise language and vocabulary, and is repetitive. Transitions are few and again repetitive (*is about; is mainly about*). Does not illustrate beyond an inconsistent command of syntactic variety; has a formal style.

## **Conventions: 2**

Inconsistent command of grade-level conventions with errors in grammar (*make new; overtime; an*) spelling (*disapear, Embarresed, developes, charachteristics*) grammar). General control of punctuation, with the exception of a misused period and missing apostrophes. Meaning is interfered with to some degree.

## Anchor Paper 10

### WRITING TASK 2

This passage is talking about embarrassment, and how your brain works. your brain has neurons that send signals to other neurons and that's why you get so embarrassed. when you were a baby, you never got embarrassed, and when you become a grown-up, you don't get embarrassed. when your around 12 to 18 I would say that's when you get the most embarrassed. there's nothing wrong with you being embarrassed, you just might feel super weird when something embarrassing happens. when you become embarrassed, it's a natural thing so don't be scared to be embarrassed. Just play it off and laugh about what you did so you won't be as embarrassed, at least that's what I do, so don't be embarrassed if something happens, because it's not your fault and you can't help it!

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## **Development: 1**

Little to no evidence from the passage is used – passage 2 is ignored other than a passing reference to *neurons* early – with the result being an inadequately developed topic that demonstrates little understanding of the task. The response largely relies on personal knowledge to elaborate on embarrassment repetitively.

## **Focus & Organization: 1**

The response contains only brief introductory and concluding sentences that are irrelevant. It focuses on *embarrassment*, but fails to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts. The length of the essay does not allow for an organizational structure to emerge.

## **Language: 2**

Very inconsistent command of precise language and vocabulary, however, some syntactic variety (... *you become embarrassed, its a natural thing so dont be scared to be ... play it off and laugh about what you did ... because its not your fault and you cant help it!*) is shown; uses basic and repetitive (*when*) transitional words and phrases. The response does not maintain a formal style.

## **Conventions: 1**

Limited command of grade-level conventions and missing apostrophes. Numerous and repeated spelling and punctuation errors seriously impede meaning.



## Anchor Paper 11

### WRITING TASK 2

The passage is really saying that teens are changing and that's true. Because when you are in middle school there's a lot going on like bullying, fighting, and things they are not suppose to do. And some people try to fit in with students that might pick on them and they try to fit in because they might not want those students picking on them any more because that person might be scared of the other students. But some times you might have to stand up for your self cause if you dont that person is going to keep doing the same thing too you because they know you might not do anything cause you let them get away with it too many times. But some people just go and confim an teacher because they dont want to get in trouble but that is the right thing too do. But that's going to make you seem and look weak then other people will start calling you weak, scared, every day and other people like your friends might stop hanging around you too fit in or just because some one told them too and that's all it take for some one too just call you weak or scared, or snitch. The end!!!!

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**Development: 1**

The response shows no understanding of the task or the stimuli. The assertion that *teens are changing* is all that relates it to the two passages. The evidence is from personal knowledge only and inadequately develops the task and topic.

**Focus & Organization: 1**

No introduction or conclusion. Concepts are unclear with a lack of focus on the task. Demonstrates an unclear organizational structure with shifting ideas (... *that is the right too Do But that's going to make you seem and, look weak ...*).

**Language: 2**

Illustrates inconsistent command of precise language and vocabulary. The response exhibits some variety in structure through some complex sentences and basic transitional words and phrases (*because, when, and, But, if*). The style of the response is informal.

**Conventions: 1**

The writing shows limited command of grade-level conventions across all categories. Run-on sentences predominate, with numerous and repeated (usage of *too*) errors seriously impeding meaning at times.

## Anchor Paper 12

### WRITING TASK 2

If you were a teen would you feel this way. Some time during middle school, changes in the brain transforms how we see the world. Because of these brain changes, teens react more strongly to social problems. During a challenge teens release more stress than a kid or adult.

In a game research participants play a game or catch online with two NPC (also known as non-playable character) the NPC's passed to each other and not to the other person playing. Teens during the experiment feel sad and left out

in the other passage it's about your brain needs to go through a maturation or break in process to start using your brain. When we are young we have more connections between our neurons than we need. The connections are there waiting to be used for things we experience to remember how to throw a football or remember a math problem. But deep thought may need to go through a pruning process to etch things in your mind.

As I think both passages were good the first one gave more evidence in the other.

## **Development: 1**

While the response provides some evidence from the text, the response shows no understanding of the task. The inadequate explanation of this evidence demonstrates little understanding of the task and topic.

## **Focus & Organization: 1**

The structure is off-task, and only attempts to summarize what both passages were about. There is no introduction and an irrelevant conclusion (*Al thogh Bothe passages were good the first one gave more evidence in the other.*)

## **Language: 1**

The reliance on copied text and the minimal amount of original writing fail to demonstrate any command of precise language, vocabulary, or syntactic variety. There are few transitional words and phrases.

## **Conventions: 1**

The response demonstrates a limited command of grade-level conventions. There are numerous spelling (*chages, challeng, expirement, contitioning, through, evidince*) capitalization, and punctuation errors that seriously impede meaning.