



CUNYASSESSMENT TEST IN WRITING (CATW) Practice 2

Read the passage below and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author's most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Brain Training

Could a simple memory workout make you smarter? An intriguing new study by researchers at the University of Michigan suggests it can—a finding that tests the notion that IQ is largely determined by genes.

The study involved 62 elementary- and middle-school children from Michigan who were assigned to train on one of two video game-like tasks. One group performed an exercise to improve working memory, the ability to hold and retrieve information in the short term. The other group practiced general knowledge. Both groups trained for one month. At the end of that time, many of the kids who had engaged in the working-memory task had improved a key attribute of their intelligence, the ability to solve new problems and reason abstractly—by five points.

Researchers have long debated whether this kind of intelligence—a predictor of educational success—could be reliably improved by training. The researchers found that kids had not only enhanced their ability after training on the working-memory tasks, but that they also maintained the gains for three months after training ended.

There were several limitations to the findings, however. To start, the size of children's improvements was inconsistent. It's possible that kids who saw greater gains were those who started out at lower ability levels and simply had more room to improve. Further, not every child improved. Perhaps more importantly, it's not clear whether higher scores on these abilities naturally translate to better grades or whether they predict more life success down the line.

The Michigan researchers are planning to investigate whether the same training task could benefit children with deficits in working memory and attention, and are working on a training program that can be easily used in schools and other educational settings.

Adapted from “How Brain Training Can Boost Intelligence” by Tara Thean, *Time Magazine*, June 16, 2011.