



CUNYASSESSMENT TEST IN WRITING (CATW) Practice 3

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

College Students Lacking Important Skills

You are told that to make it in life, you must go to college. You work hard to get there. You or your parents use savings or take out huge loans to pay for it all. And possibly you end up learning ... not much.

A study of more than 2,300 undergraduates found 45 percent of students show no significant improvement in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing by the end of their sophomore years.

Not much is asked of students, either. Half did not take a single course requiring 20 pages of writing during their prior semester, and one-third did not take a single course requiring even 40 pages of reading per week.

The study, an unusually large-scale effort to track student learning over time, comes as the federal government, reformers and others argue that the U.S. must produce more college graduates to remain competitive globally. But if students aren't learning much, that calls into question whether boosting graduation rates will provide that edge.

Just having a college degree, without the skills to back it up, will not help American students to keep pace with students in other countries. Many colleges will have to take a careful look at their programs to insure that their students are learning how to navigate in the world of ideas.

The findings also indicated what helps and hurts learning. It may not be popular news with the students, but it seems that students who study alone and have heavier reading and writing loads do better.

Adapted from "Report: College Students Not Learning Much" by Eric Gorski, *Huffington Post*, January 18, 2011.