

# District Proficiency Assessment Preparation Guide

This study guide will give you an overview of the topics covered on the District Proficiency Assessment. In addition, it will provide you with a description of the content, sample questions for each section of the test, and information about additional resources and testing tips that may assist you in preparing for these assessments.

## District Proficiency Assessment Topics:

The District Proficiency Test is a general cognitive ability test covering the following areas: (1) Reading Comprehension, (2) Written English, and (3) Math.

### 1) Reading Comprehension

#### a) Vocabulary

- i) *Description of Content:* Questions in the vocabulary section require you to identify the word whose meaning is similar (synonym) or opposite (antonym) to that of the target word.
- ii) *Sample Question:*  
Choose the word that is **MOST** similar in meaning to the underlined word.

despondent

- A) disheartened\*
- B) cheerful
- C) focused
- D) attentive

The correct answer is A. Both despondent and disheartened refer to a loss of morale, a sense of discouragement, or loss of spirit.

#### b) Reading Comprehension

- i) *Description of Content:* Questions on the reading comprehension section contain a paragraph or passage that you must read in order to determine the main idea or meaning of the content. Some correct responses will be based on the literal statements contained within the paragraph, while others will require you to infer the response that best expresses the meaning of the paragraph.

Most paragraphs have one sentence that states the author's main idea about the topic. This **topic sentence** acts as a transition between a paragraph's subject and its details. It is more specific than just a subject, and more general than the details.

A topic sentence typically has two functions:

- It unifies the paragraph by stating one main idea.
- It organizes the details presented in the paragraph.

To identify a topic sentence, ask yourself questions about the topic and the details of the paragraph.

- What is the entire paragraph about? (the subject)
- What information about the subject is provided? (details)
- What do the details tell you about the subject? What conclusions can be drawn? (The topic sentence)

Once you have identified the topic sentence and understand the main point of the paragraph, you are ready to select a response. To select the best and most appropriate response, you should ask yourself which response option:

1. expresses the main point?
2. can be inferred by the passage?
3. describes the purpose of the passage?

ii) *Sample Question:*

Groups or organizations which use school facilities regularly may serve non-alcoholic beverages and light refreshments in connection with their meetings, provided that leftover food and debris are properly disposed of, and that school facilities are restored to the condition of cleanliness at the beginning of use. Failure to abide by the provisions of this section shall result in a charge to the organizer(s) of the event and may result in denial of future use of facilities.

According to the above statement

- A) The participants of the event will be accountable if the school grounds are left dirty.
- B) Organizers of the event will be immediately ejected from the school site if alcoholic drinks are served at the school site.
- C) Only organizations, but not individuals, can organize a meeting at a school site.
- D) Individuals hosting a meeting at a school site are expected to leave the facilities in the same condition as they received it.\*

The correct answer is D. The paragraph specifically makes reference to the availability of school facilities when hosting meetings, as long as the site is restored to the condition it was in prior to the scheduled meeting; as such option D is correct. Option A is incorrect because the passage never indicates that the participants of the event will be accountable for leaving the school ground dirty. The passage implies that alcoholic beverages are not allowed to be served on school grounds, but it does not indicate that the host will be immediately removed from the premises if alcoholic beverages are served; thus option B is incorrect. Option C is also incorrect, as the paragraph never indicates that individuals are unable to reserve school facilities to hold meetings.

## 2) WRITTEN ENGLISH

### a) Spelling

i) *Description of Content:* The Spelling section will present you with a set of four words, and ask you to identify the word that is spelled incorrectly.

ii) *Sample Question:*

For the following question, choose the word that is **NOT** spelled correctly.

- A) Extend
- B) Purpetuate\*
- C) Grief
- D) Prohibit

The correct answer is B. In this case, “purpetuate” should be spelled “perpetuate”.

### b) English Usage

i) *Description of Content:* The English Usage section will test your understanding of English grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. This section of the test will present you with four sentences and ask you to identify the sentence that either (1) demonstrates the most effective use of sentence structure and English, or (2) demonstrates incorrect use of English grammar or punctuation.

ii) *Sample Question:*

For the following question, select one sentence in the group that is **BEST** and **MOST EFFECTIVE** from the standpoint of **SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND ENGLISH USAGE**.

- A) The most popular item on the menu, I thought the grilled salmon was excellent.
- B) My dog, Sammy, likes to eat their dinner early.
- C) On Friday night, Nyshima decided to go to dinner and a movie.
- D) Although he was exhausted from work, Jerry made time to play with his daughter.\*

The correct answer is D. In this case, option A contains a dangling modifier; option B has a disagreement between the singular noun (dog) and the plural pronoun (their); option C uses a non-parallel sentence structure. Option D correctly uses a comma after a sentence opener (although he was exhausted from work), and uses appropriate grammar and punctuation throughout the entire sentence. As such, option D contains the sentence that is most effective from the standpoint of sentence structure and English usage.

iii) *Sample Question:*

For the following question, select the one sentence containing grammar or punctuation that is **INCORRECT**.

- A) "You're a great friend," Jose said.
- B) Judith, my best friend went to a concert last Friday.\*
- C) I have a lot of work to do; as such, I left for work a few minutes early.
- D) According to the radio, surface streets were the best alternative to the congested freeways.

The correct answer is B. For option B, the modifier (my best friend) should be enclosed by commas on each side (i.e., Judith, my best friend, went to a concert last Friday). In the absence of a second comma, option B would be considered grammatically incorrect.

**c) Knowledge of Parts of a Sentence**

i) *Description of Content:* This section will assess your understanding of, and ability to identify, the following parts of speech: (1) simple subject; (2) simple predicate (verb); (3) direct object; and (4) adjective/adverb.

ii) *Sample Question:*

For the following question, choose the underlined part that is the simple subject of the sentence.

Although he is usually very active, Justin spent last weekend recuperating from his long trip.  
(A)\* (B) (C) (D)

The correct answer is B. Option A is an adverb, as it is describing an adjective (active). Option C is a verb, as it expresses the action that the subject (Justin) is performing; and option D is a direct object, as it is the object of the verb (spent). Option B is the simple subject, as Justin is whom the sentence is about.

**d) Combination of Sentences into One Sentence**

i) *Description of Content:* Questions in this section will present you with two sentences, and ask you to identify the best way to combine these sentences into one.

ii) *Sample Question:*

For the following question, read the underlined sentences. Select the choice that best combines those sentences into one.

My next door neighbor is usually very kind.  
My next door neighbor occasionally exhibits a strong temper.

- A) My next door neighbor is usually very kind, and occasionally exhibits a strong temper.
- B) Exhibiting a strong temper, my next door neighbor is usually very kind.
- C) Although my next door neighbor is usually very kind, she occasionally exhibits a strong temper.\*
- D) While my next door neighbor occasionally exhibits a strong temper she is usually very kind.

The correct answer is C. When reviewing the two sentences above, it is important to note that they are expressing conflicting ideas; one sentence portrays the neighbor as very kind, but the other indicates that she has a strong temper. As such, your sentence should use a conjunction that reflects the fact that you are combining two opposing ideas (for example, although; while, etc.). In this example, option A uses correct punctuation; however, the conjunction (and) does not indicate the opposing ideas. Similarly, option B uses correct punctuation; however, the two ideas do not make sense without the use of an appropriate conjunction. Option D uses a conjunction that effectively joins two opposing ideas (but); however, there is no comma after the sentence opener (i.e., comma after the word "temper"), making the sentence grammatically incorrect. Option C not only uses appropriate grammar and punctuation (note the inclusion of a comma after the sentence opener), but also uses an appropriate conjunction, "although", to connect the two opposing sentences; as such, option C is the correct response.

**e) Selection of the Topic Sentence**

- i) *Description of Content:* This section will evaluate your ability to identify the main idea, otherwise known as the topic sentence, of a paragraph. You will be presented with a paragraph, and asked to identify the topic sentence from the response options provided.
- ii) *Sample Question:*  
For the following question, read the paragraph and the topic sentences A), B), C), and D). Choose the topic sentence that best fits the paragraph.

\_\_\_\_\_. While most of his friends were playing video games, Ben was playing basketball, volleyball, soccer, and any other sport he could find. The physical activity and thrill of competition invigorated him; without it, Ben became mentally cloudy and physically lethargic. In fact, the physical activity not only kept him healthy, but also helped him excel academically.

- A) Ben never really cared for video games.
- B) Ben was at his best when he played sports.\*
- C) Ben has always loved playing sports.
- D) Sports and academics are very similar.

The correct answer is B. A topic sentence serves two purposes: (1) to unify the paragraph by stating one main idea, and (2) to organize the details presented in the paragraph. Options A and C may be true, but do not mention the positive impact that sports have on Ben. Option D is not supported by any of the information in the paragraph. Option B is the best response, as it describes the main idea of the sentence – the fact that Ben is at his physical, mental, and academic peak when he is involved in sports.

**f) Ordering of Sentences into a Paragraph**

- i) *Description of Content:* The questions in this section will present you with a series of four sentences, and ask you to order the sentences to form a well-organized paragraph. Upon arranging the sentences, you will be asked to identify which sentence is first, second, third, or fourth in the paragraph.
- ii) *Sample Question:*  
For the following question, read each group of four sentences. Then decide how to arrange each group of four sentences into a well-organized paragraph by putting the sentences in order from first to last.

Indicate the sentence order you have chosen by answering the questions that follow each group of sentences.

- A) In addition, owners must remain with their pets at all times while on park grounds.
- B) As a result, the park has decided that pets must be kept on a leash at all times.
- C) We thank you in advance for your support and cooperation.
- D) Park management has recently been informed of several pet-related incidents over the past few weeks.

In this paragraph, which sentence should be **third**?

- A) Sentence A\*
- B) Sentence B
- C) Sentence C
- D) Sentence D

The correct answer is A. Paragraphs usually start with an opening sentence that sets the framework for the rest of the paragraph; because sentence D describes the situation that prompted the need for additional rules, it would be an appropriate first sentence. Sentences A and B support the first sentence by indicating how the park is addressing the problem specified in sentence D; because these sentences support the first sentence, they would fit well as your second and third sentences. But which sentence goes first? Pay close attention to the transition phrases in sentences A and B; note that sentence A begins with “in addition”, which implies that this sentence is preceded by another supporting sentence. Given this, you can conclude that sentence B is the second sentence, while sentence A is the third sentence. Finally, sentence C is typical of a standard closing sentence, and serves as the last sentence in the paragraph. As such, sentence C is the correct response.

### 3) MATHEMATICS

#### a) Basic Mathematics

i) *Description of Content:* The Basic Mathematics section primarily focuses on topics including addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, percentages, and basic algebra.

ii) *Sample Question:*

$$1 \frac{1}{4} \div \frac{1}{8} =$$

- A) 8
- B) 9
- C) 10\*
- D) 11

The correct answer is C. Numbers that contain both a whole number and a fraction are referred to as a complex fraction; in contrast, numbers that are only expressed as fractions are known as simple fractions. The first step in this question is to convert the complex fraction ( $1 \frac{1}{4}$ ) to a simple fraction ( $\frac{5}{4}$ ). As you can see, the complex fraction contains both a whole number and a simple fraction; the whole number is 1, the denominator (bottom) of the fraction,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , is equal to 4; and the numerator (top) of the fraction is equal to 1. Convert a complex fraction to a simple fraction by multiplying the whole number of the complex fraction (1) by the denominator of the simple fraction (4), and then adding the numerator (top number) of the simple fraction (1); this number will form the numerator of your simple fraction.

Using the above information, you can calculate the numerator of your simple fraction by performing the following steps: (1)  $1 \times 4 = 4$ ; (2)  $4 + 1 = 5$ . So, the numerator of your simple fraction is 5. The denominator of your simple fraction stays the same as the denominator of your complex fraction ( $1 \frac{1}{4}$ ); in this case, the denominator is equal to 4. So, your final simple fraction is  $\frac{5}{4}$ .

The next step is to divide  $\frac{5}{4}$  by  $\frac{1}{8}$ . In cases where a number is divided by a fraction, your first step will be to flip (invert) the second fraction, so that the denominator becomes the numerator, and the numerator becomes the denominator; in this case, the second fraction ( $\frac{1}{8}$ ) will turn into  $\frac{8}{1}$  (8) when inverted. You will then multiply the first number ( $\frac{5}{4}$ ) by the second number ( $\frac{8}{1}$ ); to do this, first multiply the two numerators ( $5 \times 8$ ), followed by the two denominators ( $4 \times 1$ ). Finally, divide the resulting numerator ( $5 \times 8 = 40$ ) by the denominator ( $4 \times 1 = 4$ ) to obtain your answer ( $40 \div 4 = 10$ ).

#### b) Mathematical Concepts

i) *Description of Content:* The Mathematical Concepts section focuses on basic algebra, geometry, measurement, and mathematical word problems.

ii) *Sample Question:*

Karla purchased a total of 3 books at \$17.00 each, and 4 CDs at \$19.95 each. Assuming the CDs were 20% off, how much money did Karla spend?

- A) \$110.64
- B) \$113.24
- C) \$116.54
- D) \$114.84\*

The correct answer is D. To solve this problem, you must find the total price of all of the items. Three books at \$17.00 per book results in a total of \$51.00, while four CDs at \$19.95 per CD results in a total of \$79.80. Prior to adding these two prices together, you must reduce the cost of the CDs by 20%. First, convert 20% to a decimal by replacing the percentage sign with a decimal, and then move it two places to the left. Thus, 20% will be replaced by .20. The next step is to multiply the total price of the CDs by the converted percentage to obtain the total discounted amount of the CDs ( $\$79.80 \times .20 = \$15.96$ ). Next, subtract the discounted amount ( $\$15.96$ ) from the original cost of the CDs ( $\$79.80$ ) to find the discounted cost of the CDs; in this instance, the discounted cost is equal to \$63.84. Add the discounted cost of the CDs to the total cost of the books ( $\$51.00$ ) to obtain the total cost ( $\$63.84 + \$51.00 = \underline{\$114.84}$ ). As such, the correct answer for this question is "D".

## **Helpful Testing Tips**

Having a comprehensive understanding of the content covered on a test is essential to performing well, but there are other things you can do to prepare for a test. Below are a few general testing tips that can help you improve your performance on a test:

- Get enough sleep the night before the testing session, so you will feel rested and able to do your best.
- Arrive at the testing location well in advance of the scheduled start time. This will allow you to relax, stay calm, and concentrate on doing your best.
- If you freeze and a question stumps you, don't worry. Mark it and go on to the next question. You can always go back to it later.
- Listen closely to the proctor's instructions to know what's expected of you.
- If you finish the test early, take time to review your responses.

## **Test Preparation Resources**

There are many resources that you can use as you begin preparing for the test. Your local library and/or bookstore may have books and materials that address the topics covered on the District Proficiency Assessment. Textbooks used to prepare for the GED, SET, or California High School Exit Examination often have chapter review questions or practice tests that you might try answering. This will give you an opportunity to take tests under various timed conditions. In addition, adult education programs might offer refresher courses in mathematics, English-language arts, or other areas that are pertinent to the content covered on the District Proficiency Assessment.

The Internet is another valuable source of information. There are numerous websites that contain facts about a variety of specific and general topics. A few of the websites that may help prepare you for the District Proficiency Assessment are provided below.

## **Online Resources**

### ***Reading Comprehension***

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/elaguide.asp>

<http://www.gedforfree.com/free-ged-course/reading/reading-lesson-1.html>

### ***Written English***

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/elaguide.asp>

<http://www.gedforfree.com/free-ged-course/ged-language-arts.html>

### ***Mathematics***

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/mathguide.asp>

[www.studygs.net/mathproblems.htm](http://www.studygs.net/mathproblems.htm)