

SMART

Year 10 writing exemplars



Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Introduction

These exemplars and the accompanying feedback were all written using the year-level prompts for assessment window 1. The scores for each exemplar were produced by the Vantage scoring system used by SMART.

The exemplars, scores, and accompanying feedback can be used to support teachers to:

- mark any pieces of writing that SMART cannot e.g. pieces that are shorter than 100 words
- confirm or change the AI-assisted scoring for students' pieces of writing.

Note that these writing samples and the accompanying feedback have been produced with the assistance of AI. They will be updated later in the year, to incorporate information from the scaling and equating processes after assessment window 1. These processes will convert raw scores into progress descriptors for each year-level, which will make more explicit how each exemplar aligns with curriculum expectations.

Year 10 — Four Day School Week

Year 10 writing progress marker

By the end of Year 10, students who are **proficient** in writing, can:

- strategically plan and craft texts, selecting and adapting language, structural, and stylistic features that suit a range of audiences and purposes, and reflect the demands of different forms
- establish a clear and purposeful voice, and use grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary with precision to support clarity, coherence, and style
- when writing literary essays, develop a thesis that presents a clear case, structure body paragraphs to build an argument, and use relevant evidence and contextual knowledge to support their interpretation of authorial choices
- conclude by rephrasing the thesis and reinforcing key insights.

Year 10 writing prompt

To conserve energy and resources, some businesses have adopted a four-day work week, with each working day being longer.

Should your school follow this model by extending the school day by two hours?

Write a speech to be given in school assembly, introducing the issue.

Cove the benefits and disadvantages to a four-day school week and take a position on this issue.

Support your position with reasons and examples.

Feedback for Score 5 and 6 Exemplar, Year 10

Audience and Purpose [6/6]

The assembly is addressed formally and both sides are explored substantively before a qualified position is taken. The response raises the equity dimension (vulnerable students who depend on school for safety, meals, and adult support) and offers a constructive alternative framing ('improving the quality of learning within the structure we have').

Content Development/Elaboration [5/6]

Three benefits are outlined in the response: wellbeing and productivity (research-referenced, three-day weekend refreshment effect); learning quality and depth (fifty-minute block critique, in-depth learning argument); and workforce preparation (future employment patterns). Two disadvantages are detailed: scheduling and family logistics (sport, primary school pickup — specific times named); and equity and safeguarding (structure, safety, meals, adult support for vulnerable students — specific provisions named). The position conclusion engages disadvantages directly before arguing that the evidence does not yet justify the disruption.

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Balance. The ability to work hard, recover fully, and come back performing at your best. It is what high-performing athletes pursue, and it is what the four-day school week is really about. Research has shown that when adult workers shift to a four-day week, productivity does not fall. In many cases it rises. Should schools do the same? Today I want to explore both sides of this question honestly before I share my own view.

First, let me make the case for the four-day school week, because the research supporting it deserves to be taken seriously. Studies of workplaces that have trialled the four-day model have consistently found improvements in wellbeing, engagement, and output. Workers who have a three-day weekend arrive on Monday more genuinely refreshed than those who have had two days. If the same effect transfers to students, the case for change is powerful. Advocates also argue that longer school days could allow for more sustained, in-depth learning, rather than the fragmented fifty-minute blocks that dominate most timetables. And there is a long-term argument worth considering: if four-day working weeks become the norm in employment, helping young people develop the habits and self-discipline to manage that structure is arguably part of preparing them for the world they will enter.

However, there are real disadvantages to the four-day week in a school context, and they deserve honest engagement rather than dismissal. The most significant practical problem is the effect on after-school activities and family logistics. If each school day runs for ten hours, sport training that currently runs from four to six o'clock gets pushed into evening darkness. Families who collect younger children from primary school at three o'clock face a scheduling conflict with no easy solution. These are genuine complications that affect real people.

A second disadvantage, and one that is rarely discussed by advocates of the four-day week, is the question of who benefits from a longer weekend. For students from stable, well-resourced homes, a three-day weekend is a genuine opportunity for rest, family time, and enrichment. But for students whose home environments are difficult or under-resourced, school provides structure, safety, reliable meals, and adult support that is not always available elsewhere. For those students, an extra day away from school each week is not a benefit. It is a loss. Any responsible school board must take this equity dimension seriously.

Having considered both sides, my view is that the evidence for the four-day week is not yet strong enough to justify the disruption it would cause, particularly for the students who are most vulnerable to that disruption. The complications of changing the school week, including the impact on activities, transport, and equity, do not measure up against the benefits that the research currently supports. That research is still emerging, and the findings from adult workplaces may not transfer directly to a school context. For now, the better approach is to focus on improving the quality of learning within the structure we have, rather than changing the structure itself.
Ngā mihi.

Structure [5/6]

The response has a cohesive speech structure. It includes a Māori greeting, hook opening, both-sides framing question, benefits section with three arguments, disadvantages section with explicit honest-engagement signal, qualified position conclusion with constructive alternative, and a farewell.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [6/6]

The response has precise, rhetorically sophisticated, and audience-aware language. Conditional structures and evidence-grounding are used throughout. The closing reframe of the question is a distinctive and effective rhetorical move. Register is formal and sustained.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [5/6]

Grammar is correct throughout. Apostrophes and possessives are correct. All words are spelled correctly. No errors interfere with communication.

Feedback for Score 4 Exemplar, Year 10

Audience and Purpose [4/6]

The response demonstrates a clear understanding of audience and purpose. The assembly is addressed. The issue is introduced, both sides explored, and a position stated and argued.

Content Development/Elaboration [4/6]

Two benefits are outlined in the response: wellbeing and productivity research; and deeper learning potential. Two disadvantages are included: cognitive load in longer days; and equity risk for vulnerable students. The position conclusion argues qualified rejection, with reasoning (evidence from adult workplaces does not transfer; equity risk too serious). This response is less nuanced than writing that would receive higher scores (for example, there is no constructive alternative framing, and fewer specific evidence references).

Good morning, everyone.

My name is Jack Turoa, and I am going to talk today about the four-day school week: an idea where students would attend school for four longer days instead of five, with each day extended by about two hours. I want to look honestly at the benefits and the disadvantages of this idea before I tell you what I think.

Starting with the benefits: research into four-day working weeks in businesses has shown real improvements in wellbeing and productivity. If the same effect works in schools, students coming back from a three-day weekend might be more genuinely refreshed and motivated than students coming back from two days off. A second benefit is that longer days could allow for better, deeper learning. Instead of rushing through content in fifty-minute blocks, teachers could build in more sustained project work and inquiry, which many educational researchers think is more effective for real understanding.

However, there are genuine disadvantages. The first is that longer school days would be physically and mentally demanding, particularly for younger students. A student in the final two hours of a ten-hour school day is not going to be learning as effectively as they were in the first two hours. There is also a real equity concern: for students who rely on school for safe space, regular meals, and adult support, an extra day away from school every week is not a benefit. It could actually be a significant loss.

My view is that the four-day school week is an interesting idea but not the right solution for most New Zealand schools right now. The evidence for benefits mainly comes from adult workplaces, and students, particularly at younger year levels, are not the same as adult employees. The equity risk for vulnerable students is too serious to ignore. I think schools should focus on improving the quality and structure of learning within the current week rather than simply changing how many days it runs. Thank you for listening.

Structure [4/6]

The speech includes a greeting, introduction, benefits, disadvantages, and a position conclusion. Transitional language is effective.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [4/6]

This is an effective and appropriate response for a Year 10 assembly. There is some sentence variety and a clear voice.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [4/6]

Grammar and punctuation are mostly correct.

Feedback for Score 2 and 3 Exemplar, Year 10

Audience and Purpose [3/6]

The speech clearly understands that the audience is a school assembly and that the purpose is to introduce the issue fairly while still persuading listeners toward a position. The writer handles that balance very well by acknowledging why the idea might appeal to people before arguing against it. The position is clear, sustained, and convincingly argued all the way through to the conclusion. The ending feels measured and deliberate rather than simplistic. Sentences are varied, well formed, and used confidently to support the persuasive purpose.

Content Development/Elaboration [3/6]

The response covers both benefits and disadvantages before reaching a reasoned conclusion. The writer explains possible savings, extra flexibility, and the appeal of a weekday off, then weighs these against fatigue, declining concentration, and disruption to after-school life. The statement that “not all learning time is equal” is especially effective because it challenges the idea that more hours automatically mean more learning. The final comparison between improving quality and rearranging time also strengthens the logic of the speech. Sentences extend the ideas clearly and make the argument thoughtful and convincing.

Good morning everyone,

A four-day school week sounds appealing at first. One less day at school each week can seem like an obvious improvement. However, the real question is not how many days we spend at school. The real question is whether a longer school day would actually improve learning and daily life for students. In my view, it would not.

There are possible benefits to this model. Fewer travel days could save time, reduce some transport costs, and give students one extra weekday away from school. Some people might also think that an extra day off would allow more rest or more flexibility for appointments, family plans, or part-time work.

But those benefits come with serious disadvantages. A school day that is two hours longer could leave students mentally exhausted by the end. That matters because not all learning time is equal. If concentration drops sharply in the final hours, then the timetable may be longer without becoming more effective. It could also make sport, jobs, family routines, transport, and after-school commitments much harder to manage.

Some students might enjoy the extra day off, but they would still need to complete the same amount of school work in a more tiring pattern. That trade-off does not seem worthwhile to me. If schools want better learning, the stronger solution is to improve the quality of the time we already have, not simply rearrange it into a more exhausting week. For those reasons, I do not think a four-day school week is the right model for our school.

Structure [2/6]

The structure is effective for a formal persuasive speech. The writer begins by framing the issue, develops possible benefits fairly, then turns to disadvantages, and ends with a clear evaluation and conclusion. This gives the response a strong logical and rhetorical arc. Each paragraph has a distinct role, and the final judgment feels earned. The speech is balanced, complete, and easy to follow. Sentences connect smoothly and support the logical progression of ideas.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [3/6]

The language is precise and audience aware. Vocabulary such as “flexibility,” “concentration,” “trade-off,” and “rearrange” helps the speech sound analytical. The tone is balanced, credible, and persuasive, which suits a public speech to peers. The writer sounds calm and considered. Sentences are well structured and varied enough to keep the speech controlled and engaging.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [3/6]

Grammar is secure, punctuation is accurate, and spelling supports smooth reading throughout. Paragraphing is strong and helps separate the speech into clear stages. Longer sentences are handled well without becoming confusing. Overall, the speech looks polished and complete. Sentences are correctly structured and support clear communication throughout.

Feedback for Score 2 Exemplar, Year 10

Audience and Purpose [2/6]

The speech writer clearly understands that they are speaking to students in an assembly and trying to persuade them about the issue. The position is stated early and remains steady throughout the speech. The writer includes both benefits and disadvantages, which helps the speech fit the task well. The conclusion returns clearly to the writer's final view and makes the speech feel complete. Most sentences are correctly structured and support clear reading.

Content Development/Elaboration [2/6]

The writer gives several relevant and effective ideas, including an extra day off, fewer travel days, tiredness, reduced focus, and disruption to after-school routines. These points are clearly explained and support the argument well. The speech is balanced because it acknowledges benefits before deciding against the proposal. The development is effective, although less layered and less analytical than needed for higher scores at this year level. Sentences provide enough detail to make the argument convincing.

Good morning everyone,

I do not think our school should move to a four-day school week. Although the idea sounds attractive because it gives students one extra day away from school, I believe the longer days would create more problems than benefits.

There are some advantages. Students may enjoy having an extra weekday free, and there may be fewer travel days and possibly lower transport costs. Some people may also like the idea of having more flexibility during the week.

However, the disadvantages are more serious. A much longer school day could make students tired and less focused by the end. If attention drops, the extra time may not help learning very much. A four-day week could also affect sport, jobs, transport, and family routines, because students would be getting home much later.

Even though the extra day off may sound good, students would still have the same amount of work in a more tiring schedule. For those reasons, I believe a four-day school week would not be a good choice for our school.

Structure [2/6]

The structure is secure and easy to follow. The speech opens with the position, discusses benefits, then disadvantages, and ends with a clear overall judgment. This progression fits the task well and makes the response easy for listeners to follow. Paragraphing is purposeful, and the ending is strong. The response is mostly unified and logical.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [2/6]

The language is appropriate, controlled, and persuasive. Vocabulary such as “flexibility,” “disadvantages,” and “schedule” helps the speech sound thoughtful and audience aware. The tone is balanced and suitable for an assembly. The voice is steady and credible. Sentences show good control with some natural variety, although they are slightly less textured than those in the top band.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [2/6]

Grammar and punctuation are mostly secure, and spelling does not interfere with the message. Paragraphing helps organise the ideas clearly. Sentence boundaries are well handled, including in longer sentences. Any small weaknesses would not significantly interfere with meaning.

Feedback for Score 1 Exemplar, Year 10

Audience and Purpose [1/6]

The response establishes a position and clearly tries to persuade the audience against the four-day school week. The task is recognisably understood, and the speech stays on topic. However, the persuasive shaping is still basic, and much of the response sounds like broad opinion rather than carefully developed argument for an assembly audience. The ending does help the speech feel complete. The frequent errors interfere with clear communication.

Content Development/Elaboration [1/6]

There are relevant ideas here: an extra day off, less travel, longer days, tiredness, sport, home life, and stress. The writer also attempts to weigh a benefit against disadvantages, which is useful for this task. However, the development is uneven and harder to follow because spelling, wording, and sentence control interfere with clarity. Some ideas are repeated instead of extended. The support is partial rather than strong, and the reader has to work to follow the reasoning.

Good morning,

I do not think a four-day school week is a good idea because even if pepol like an extra day off the longer days can make students to tired and that can make learning worse and that seems like a bad trade to me. There may be some good things like less travel and one more day away from school and I can understand why some students might like that.

But I think the disadvantages are bigger because students still have the same work and longer days and it can affect sport and home life to and that makes the week harder. That is why I do not think we should have a four-day school week because it sounds good at first but could make the week more stresfull and less useful for learning.

Structure [1/6]

This response shows an attempt at paragraphing. The first paragraph introduces the issue and some benefits, and the second turns back to the main view. However, the organisation is still weak because the internal flow of each paragraph is loose and not clearly shaped. Several ideas run together without clean separation. The speech remains readable, but the overall structure is basic and only partly effective.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [1/6]

The language shows a basic attempt to persuade, but the word choice and sentence control are limited. There are noticeable spelling mistakes such as “pepol,” “to tired,” “to,” and “stresfull,” and these problems interfere with smooth communication. The tone remains school-appropriate, but the voice is weak and not carefully shaped for an assembly audience. The speech sounds rough rather than controlled.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [1/6]

Errors are frequent enough to interfere with clear communication, but not so severe that the message becomes impossible to follow. Sentence boundaries are weak, punctuation is limited, spelling mistakes are noticeable throughout, and grammar is inconsistent. The reader can still work out the main point, but not easily or smoothly.