**Persuasive Essay**

**Score 4 Benchmark Paper** The writing is completely focused on the topic and the persuasive task. The paper conveys a sense of completeness and never veers from the main idea. The paper is well-organized. Reasons (arguments) are told in order in separate paragraphs and are smoothly connected by transitional words and phrases. Support for reasons is substantial (paragraph 2), specific (Mr. Palladino explains biology with all sorts of diagrams . . .), relevant, and illustrative (The consequences may be a job I don’t get . . .). The writer demonstrates a commitment to and involvement with the subject (Please, please send me to summer school), clarity in the presentation of ideas, a mature command of language (benefit, certain, tossing, failure written on a permanent record, absolutely, predict, obstacles, jeopardize), and the use of creative writing strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper (last paragraph, repetition of the word yes for emphasis and effect). Sentences are varied and flow smoothly.

**Score 3 Benchmark Paper** The paper is generally focused on the topic and purpose. The paper has an apparent organizational pattern, although some lapses occur. (For example, transitional words or phrases are needed to connect the last three paragraphs.) The writer gives three reasons, but one of the reasons probably will not be convincing or relevant to a parent (Summer school would hardly give me time to rest my brain . . . I would not be able to wake up late). Support for reasons is adequate, but to raise the score of this paper the writer needs to add more facts and examples to reasons 2 and 3 (paragraphs 3 and 4). Some word choice is precise (ruin, destroy, wreck), but many words are vague (bad, fun) and predictable (go, have, work). Some sentences are varied, but many are short and choppy.

**Score 2 Benchmark Paper** The paper is generally focused on the topic and purpose but includes some loosely related material (paragraph 2: I love summer . . . than winter . . .). There is an attempt at an organizational pattern, but the absence of transitional words and phrases makes the essay difficult to follow. The writer gives three reasons, but support for these reasons is bare. Word choice is limited, and many sentences sound the same.
Persuasive Essay (continued)

**Score 1 Benchmark Paper** The writing is only minimally focused on topic and purpose. There is little evidence of any organizational pattern. The writer repeats the same single reason (*I have good grades*) and offers no support for that reason. The writer gives an opinion but gives only one poorly supported reason. Word choice is predictable (to go, rather be home) and vague (good, stupid), and most sentences are short.