Astronauts Informational Performance Task

**Task:**
Your class is creating a magazine about interesting jobs people do. Each person has been assigned to learn about a different job. Your assignment is to learn about what it is like to be an astronaut. You have found two sources about being an astronaut.

After you have looked at these sources, you will answer some questions about them. Briefly scan the sources and the three questions that follow. Then, go back and read the sources carefully so you will have the information you will need to answer the questions and write an informational article.

In Part 2, you will write an informational article using information you have read.

**Directions for Beginning:**
You will now look at two sources. You can look at either of the sources as often as you like.

**Research Questions:**
After looking at the sources, use the rest of the time in Part 1 to answer three questions about them. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, your answers will help you think about the information you have read and looked at, which should help you write your informational article.

You may click on the buttons to look at the sources when you think it would be helpful. You may also look at your notes. Answer the questions in the spaces below them.

**Part 1**

**Sources for Performance Task:**

**Source #1**
This article about astronauts is based on information in the following sources:
- http://www.esa.int/esaKIDSen/SEM3RIWJD1E_LifeInSpace_0.html
Have you ever thought about what it is like in space? Astronauts are people who go out into space. Being an astronaut is an exciting job. Astronauts can see the Earth from space. They can see how it is round, like a ball. They can look down and see clouds, land, and water. They can even see the Moon up close. Astronauts get the chance to see more stars than you or I have ever seen.

Being an astronaut may be exciting, but it is not an easy job. A person who wants to be an astronaut has to study for years. There are many things an astronaut must learn to do before going into space for the first time.

Astronauts train for hundreds of hours. There are three different levels of training they must pass before leaving for space. During their training, they learn about science and space. They also learn medical skills so they can keep each other healthy and safe when they are in space. Astronauts learn about what life is like on the International Space Station (ISS) and they also practice riding in special vehicles that are meant just for space. They even take classes in scuba diving! The feeling in their suits underwater is very similar to walking in space. A very important thing astronauts must also learn is how to work together as a team. Each person has a special job to do as part of the team.
Since there are different kinds of astronauts who have different kinds of jobs, some of the training they get is also different. Some astronauts learn about how to put things together and become very good at fixing things. They go to space to fix things on spaceships. Some astronauts are pilots who know how to fly airplanes. They have to study how to fly and steer a spaceship. They train for many hours to learn how to turn it, how to make it go faster and slower, and how to guide it through space. Some astronauts are leaders. They are in charge of all the people on the ship. They make sure that everybody is doing the right job. Other astronauts learn mostly about science. They go into space to learn how living things change when they are in space.

When astronauts are in a spaceship that is moving around Earth, they can feel as though they don’t weigh anything. They can float. This is because the spaceship is in constant free fall around Earth, which means that it is quickly dropping as it moves around Earth. When something is in free fall, it can feel as though it is weightless and floating. Many astronauts say that it is fun to float around the inside of a spaceship. Other objects in the spaceship also can float, so astronauts can lift and move heavy things easily.

Feeling weightless is fun, but being in space is work for astronauts. Astronauts must be healthy and eat right. They have to exercise and be in good shape. Astronauts get to have many adventures. But they work hard, too.
Many people say they want to be an astronaut, but do they know what it is really like? Because astronauts have to know many things, they spend many years studying. They go to school for 12 years. Then they go to college for four years. After that, they have to study for at least two more years. That is 18 years of school in total! Some astronauts spend even more time studying. After all that time in school, they still have to do special training to learn how to live in space.

When astronauts are in space, they feel weightless. They can float. This sounds like fun, but it is not that simple. The human body is used to being on Earth. Some people stay out in space for months. A lot of strange things happen to the body when it feels weightless and floats for that long.

Astronauts sometimes feel sick in space. It takes a few days for them to get used to feeling weightless and being able to float.

Being in space also changes how blood flows in the body. In space, more blood flows to the astronauts’ heads. Their faces get puffy. Their necks get bigger. At the same time, less blood flows to their legs making them skinny. They call this condition “bird legs.”

The heart is a muscle. It pumps blood around the body. The heart does not have to work as hard to pump blood in space. A muscle that does not work hard gets weaker and smaller. Astronauts’ other muscles and their bones can get weaker, too, because they do not have to work as hard to move the astronaut’s body.

Astronauts have to do exercises when they are in space so they do not get too weak. They use big rubber bands. They attach them to the walls of the spaceship and hook them over their shoulders. Then they bend their knees and press against them to make their legs stronger.

When astronauts come back from space, they feel weak. It takes time for them to get used to being on the ground again.
A two-point response includes a total of three reasons why it is difficult to be an astronaut. Reasons must be provided using information from both sources, only one of which may be cited. Responses are not scored for grammar usage, conventions, spelling, or punctuation.

**Sample Two-Point Response:**

- Even though it’s an exciting job, being an astronaut can be difficult for many reasons. In both sources, we learn that astronauts have to study for a long time to prepare for jobs in space. Source 1 explains that astronauts go through three different levels of training before they leave the ground. From Source 2, we learn that astronauts can become weak and sick as they adjust to life on a spaceship. The astronauts need to work hard to stay in shape. Both sources show us how hard it can be to be an astronaut, both before and after they go into space.

A one-point response includes two reasons why it is difficult to be an astronaut, using information from both sources. A response that includes two or three reasons why it is difficult to be an astronaut, using information from only one source also receives one point.

**Sample One-Point Response:**

- Being an astronaut sounds really hard. The first source says that astronauts need to study for hundreds of hours to learn how to live in space. The second source says that astronauts need to exercise in space to stay healthy.

A response that provides one reason why it is difficult to be an astronaut or does not provide any relevant reasons from the sources receives no credit.

**Sample Zero-Point Response:**

- Being an astronaut is very exciting because astronauts can float.
A two-point response identifies Source 2 and provides two examples from that source to describe how the feeling of “floating in space” affects astronauts. Responses are not scored for grammar usage, conventions, spelling, or punctuation.

Sample Two-Point Response:

- Both sources mention floating in space, but the second source really describes what floating feels like for the astronauts. Floating may sound like fun, but it can make people sick after months in space. When their blood flow changes, their necks and faces get puffy, and their legs get thin and weak. Even their bones can get weaker because they don’t have to carry weight.

A one-point response identifies Source 2 and provides one example from that source or provides two examples and does not identify the source that describes how the feeling of “floating in space” affects astronauts.

Sample One-Point Response:

- Source 2 explains that astronauts’ hearts get weaker when they’re in space because they don’t have to pump the blood as hard.

A response that does not identify Source 2 and does not provide any relevant examples or only identifies the source or one example to describe how the feeling of floating affects astronauts receives no credit.

Sample Zero-Point Response:

- Astronauts float inside their spaceships.
Which topic can be found in both sources?

A. Astronauts train to do different kinds of jobs in space.
B. Astronauts have a special view of the Moon and Earth.
C. It is important for astronauts to get plenty of exercise.
D. Floating in space can have strange effects on astronauts.

The correct response, option C, receives a score of 1 point.
Student Directions for Part 2

You will now look at your sources, take notes, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your article. You may use your notes and go back to the sources. Now read your assignment and the information about how your informational article will be scored; then begin your work.

Your assignment:
Your class is creating a magazine about interesting jobs people do. Each person has been assigned to write about a different job.

Your assignment is to write an informational article that is several paragraphs long that will help the students in your class know what the job of an astronaut is like. The magazine will be read by the students in your class, parents, and your teacher.

Make sure to have a main idea, clearly organize your article, and support your main idea with details from the sources using your own words. Be sure to develop your ideas clearly.

REMEMBER: A well-written informational article:
- has a clear main idea
- is well-organized and stays on the topic
- has an introduction and conclusion
- uses transitions
- uses details from the sources to support your main idea
- develops ideas clearly
- uses clear language
- follows rules of writing (spelling, punctuation, and grammar)

Now begin work on your informational article. Manage your time carefully so that you can

1. plan your article
2. write your article
3. revise and edit the final draft of your article

Word-processing tools and spell check are available to you.
For Part 2, you are being asked to write an article that is several paragraphs long. Type your
text in the box below. The box will get bigger as you type. Remember to check your notes
and your prewriting/planning as you write and then revise and edit your article.
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<th>3</th>
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| Purpose/Organization | The response has a clear and effective organizational structure, creating a sense of unity and completeness. The response is fully sustained, and consistently and purposefully focused: | The response has an evident organizational structure and a sense of completeness, though there may be minor flaws and some ideas may be loosely connected. The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: | The response has an inconsistent organizational structure, and flaws are evident. The response is somewhat sustained and may have a minor drift in focus: | The response has little or no discernible organizational structure. The response may be related to the topic but may provide little or no focus: | - Unintelligible  
- In a language other than English  
- Off-topic  
- Copied text  
- Off-purpose |
<p>| controlling or main idea of a topic is clearly communicated, and the focus is strongly maintained for the purpose, audience, and task | controlling or main idea of a topic is clear, and the focus is mostly maintained for the purpose, audience, and task | controlling or main idea of a topic may be somewhat unclear, or the focus may be insufficiently sustained for the purpose, audience, and task | controlling or main idea may be confusing or ambiguous; response may be too brief or the focus may drift from the purpose, audience, and task |  |
| consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies to clarify the relationships between and among ideas | adequate use of transitional strategies with some variety to clarify the relationships between and among ideas | inconsistent use of transitional strategies and/or little variety | few or no transitional strategies are evident |  |
| effective introduction and conclusion | adequate introduction and conclusion | introduction or conclusion, if present, may be weak | introduction and/or conclusion may be missing |  |
| logical progression of ideas from beginning to end; strong connections between and among ideas with some syntactic variety | adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end; adequate connections between and among ideas | uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end; and/or formulaic; inconsistent or unclear connections between and among ideas | frequent extraneous ideas may be evident; ideas may be randomly ordered or have an unclear progression |  |</p>
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<td><strong>Evidence/Elaboration</strong></td>
<td>The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the controlling idea and supporting idea(s) that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details. The response clearly and effectively elaborates ideas, using precise language:</td>
<td>The response provides adequate support/evidence for the controlling idea and supporting idea(s) that includes the use of sources, facts, and details. The response adequately elaborates ideas, employing a mix of precise and more general language:</td>
<td>The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the controlling idea and supporting idea(s) that includes uneven or limited use of sources, facts, and details. The response elaborates ideas unevenly, using simplistic language:</td>
<td>The response provides minimal support/evidence for the controlling idea and supporting idea(s) that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details. The response is vague, lacks clarity, or is confusing:</td>
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<td>▪ comprehensive evidence from sources is integrated; references are relevant and specific</td>
<td>▪ adequate evidence from sources is integrated; some references may be general</td>
<td>▪ some evidence from sources may be weakly integrated, imprecise, or repetitive; references may be vague</td>
<td>▪ evidence from the source material is minimal or irrelevant; references may be absent or incorrectly used</td>
<td>▪ Unintelligible</td>
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<td>▪ effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques*</td>
<td>▪ adequate use of some elaborative techniques</td>
<td>▪ weak or uneven use of elaborative techniques; development may consist primarily of source summary</td>
<td>▪ minimal, if any, use of elaborative techniques</td>
<td>▪ In a language other than English</td>
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<td>▪ vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose</td>
<td>▪ vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose</td>
<td>▪ vocabulary use is uneven or somewhat ineffective for the audience and purpose</td>
<td>▪ vocabulary is limited or ineffective for the audience and purpose</td>
<td>▪ Off-topic</td>
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<td>▪ effective, appropriate style enhances content</td>
<td>▪ generally appropriate style is evident</td>
<td>▪ inconsistent or weak attempt to create appropriate style</td>
<td>▪ little or no evidence of appropriate style</td>
<td>▪ Copied text</td>
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<td>▪ Off-purpose</td>
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*Elaborative techniques may include the use of personal experiences that support the controlling idea.
## 2-Point
### Informative-Explanatory
#### Performance Task Writing Rubric (Grades 3–5)

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| Conventions | The response demonstrates an adequate command of conventions:  
- adequate use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling | The response demonstrates a partial command of conventions:  
- limited use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling | The response demonstrates little or no command of conventions:  
- infrequent use of correct sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling | Unintelligible  
- In a language other than English  
- Off-topic  
- Copied text  
(Off-purpose responses will still receive a score in Conventions.) |

### Holistic Scoring:

- **Variety**: A range of errors includes formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar usage, and spelling
- **Severity**: Basic errors are more heavily weighted than higher-level errors.
- **Density**: The proportion of errors to the amount of writing done well. This includes the ratio of errors to the length of the piece.