

Directions: *There are 2 passages in this section. Each passage is followed by some questions or unfinished statements. For each of them there are four choices marked A), B), C) and D). You should decide on the best choice and mark the corresponding letter on **Answer Sheet 2** with a single line through the centre.*

Passage Two

Questions 51 to 55 are based on the following passage.

The traditional school year, with three months of vacation every summer, was first implemented when America was an agricultural society and the summer months were needed for farm work. Since then, we've completely changed as a nation. Students no longer spend summers farming, but they aren't in school, either. The average American student receives 13 weeks off from school each calendar year—with about 11 of those during the summer. Few other countries have more than seven weeks off in a school calendar.

With the U.S. lagging behind other countries in academics, it's time to consider year-round schooling. One benefit of this change is that students will not fall victim to the "summer slide," or the well-documented phenomenon where students forget some of the knowledge they have acquired when too much time is taken off from school. Decades of research shows that it can take from 8 to 13 weeks at the beginning of every school year for students to get back to where they were before the summer holiday.

But year-round schooling isn't just about academics. Teachers and students experience a closer relationship in year-round schools than they do in traditional schools and, in the absence of any long-term break, students do not feel detached from the school environment. These closer bonds and greater attachment pay off. Research shows that students in year-round schools are more self-confident and feel more positive about their schooling experience.

But don't kids need time to relax? Some childhood development experts believe that time off from school is vital to healthy development as kids are not designed to spend so much of their time inside classrooms and the summer break provides a perfect opportunity to get outside. The problem with this argument is that most children aren't playing outside or even spending time with other kids. While some children visit summer camps, most stay at home, watching TV or playing games on electronic devices, which hardly benefits them.

The U.S. has changed from a farming economy to a knowledge- and innovation-based economy, so it makes sense for the school year to change as well.

51. Why did America's traditional school year have a three-month summer vacation?

- A) Students needed to help with farm work.
- B) Students needed time to learn necessary farming skills.
- C) The agricultural society then attached less importance to academics.
- D) America lagged behind other countries in making a scientific school calendar.

52. What benefit will year-round schooling bring students in addition to improving their learning?

- A) It will help them get back to where their lessons started.
- B) It will enable them to absorb what they have learned.
- C) It will familiarize them with the school environment.
- D) It will strengthen their relationship with teachers.

53. What do some childhood development experts believe about the long summer vacation?

- A) It meets students' need to study on their own.
- B) It enables students to learn about the outside world.
- C) It satisfies students' desire to stay longer at home.
- D) It contributes to students' healthy growth.

54. What is the argument against the experts' idea of a long summer vacation?

- A) It does little good to most students.
- B) It benefits few students playing outside.
- C) It leads students to neglect their studies.
- D) It makes students addicted to computer games.

55. What does the author think of the traditional school year in the U.S. today?

- A) Well-grounded.
- B) Culture-bound.
- C) Outdated.
- D) Welcomed.