Landmark College High School Program
Placement Test-Reading and Writing

We want to place you in classes where you will receive the most useful and appropriate level of instruction. In order to do this, we need a sense of your present skills. It is important that this test represent your independent work. Please do not ask for or receive any assistance unless you need assistance with the directions.

This test has four parts. Do your best to complete them all. If you are unable to complete a part, record that on the test and tell us why. The reason is an important factor that we will consider.

Throughout the test, you will be asked to record your start and stop times, so you will need a clock or watch with you when you begin the test.

Make a copy of your placement test for your records before returning it to us.

John Nissen
Dean of Pre-College Programs

Return by mail to: OR Return by email attachment to:
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Landmark College Landmark College
River Road South River Road South
Putney, VT 05346 Putney, VT 05346
803-387-6718 803-387-6718
**Part 1:** Read the attached article, “Digital Kids: Dumber and More Distractible? or Do Kids Learn Better Online?” by Nancy Shute, from U.S. News and World Report, April 9, 2010. Feel free to use assistive technology to assist in reading. Take any notes that you think will be helpful.

***Start Time _________ End Time __________***

**Part 2:** The words listed below are used in the article that you just read. Using only the article, do your best to define these terms in your own words. Don't look them up or ask for assistance. If you do not understand what a word means, just leave it blank.

***Start Time _________ End Time __________***

1. **slanderous**

2. **multitasking**

3. **frontal lobes**

4. **excessive**
Part 3: Based on the article you read, answer the following questions in complete sentences. You are encouraged to go back to the article and review your notes. It is better to answer in your own words rather than over-using direct quotes.

***Start Time ____________  End Time ____________ ***

1. What is this article about?

2. What impact does multitasking have on learning according to Clifford Nass from Stanford University?

3. According to the article, what happens to the brain while using Google?

4. According to the article, what is one positive and one negative effect of multitasking?

5. How is the Shakespeare quote, “We are consumed by that which we are nourished by” relevant to this article?
Part 4: Write a paragraph that **summarizes** the article, including the author's thesis and main ideas. Feel free to type or handwrite your paragraph.

***Start Time _________ End Time __________***
ON PARENTING

Digital Kids: Dumber and More Distractable? Or Do Kids Learn Better Online?

By NANCY SHUTE

I'm still reeling over the recent news that, on average, American kids spend 7.5 hours a day with electronic media—and that's not even counting texting! If you're wondering how this affects how our kids live and how our families function, check out the wide-angle view in tonight's Frontline documentary, "Digital Nation." Among the show's wake-up calls:

* College students are doing worse at absorbing information from their lectures and reading because they're constantly multitasking with laptops and cellphones, according to David Jones, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who has tested his students' comprehension.

* People who multitask are much worse at thinking, remembering, and staying focused. But kids who multitask (and parents, too) think they're great at it and that it doesn't impair learning or performance, according to Clifford Nass, a Stanford University psychologist who studies the psychology of technology.

* Nobody really knows what constant use of the Internet does to our brains. So far the only brain scans that compared reading to looking for information using Google found that the brain's frontal lobes were more than twice as active while using the search engine. But that's not necessarily good, says Gary Small, the neuroscientist at the University of California–Los Angeles who conducted that study. The frontal lobes are used for reasoning and decision making, but more activity on an MRI doesn't mean it's "better." It could be that people's brains have to work harder because they're less efficient while searching online. "It's a little like playing golf," Small says in the documentary. "You want your score to go down."

* Concerned that children's excessive Internet use is causing psychiatric disorders, South Korean schools now teach "Internet etiquette." This includes warnings about the health risks of excessive online gaming and signs that say: "Slanderous comments on the Internet hurt my friends."

Not all the news on kids and the Internet reported in the Frontline documentary is bad. Reading and math scores soared at a troubled Bronx, N.Y., middle school after instruction was changed so that the students are online, with laptops, in every class. But even there, teachers struggle to keep students focused on To Kill a Mockingbird rather than watching YouTube and instant messaging in class. (The kids are clever at outfoxing software that blocks access to social media sites.)

I'm as devoted a multitasker as any other mom and find it darned hard not to glance at my E-mail while at the playground. But I was struck by the words of Sherry Turkle, an MIT professor who has been studying the relationship between people and technology for 25 years. "The
Shakespeare quote is, 'We are consumed by that which we are nourished by,' Turkle tells the filmmakers. She admits that she feels like "a master of the universe" after E-mailing and Googling all day, but then she realizes she hasn't thought hard about anything. "The point of it is to be our most creative selves, not to distract ourselves to death."

So, are we learning and communicating better with our zippy new digital tools, or merely distracting ourselves to death? You can watch "Digital Nation" online (of course) for more on that debate. Then tell me what you think.