Sample TOEFL Essay #2

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Only people who earn a lot of money are successful.

Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

Sample TOEFL essay answer:
It is said that money makes the world go round. We spend the majority of our waking hours at work - earning a living, providing for our families and saving for our retirement. Although money no doubt plays a critical role in determining the quality and nature of our lifestyles, in my opinion, the size of one’s paycheque is not a measure of one’s success in life. The bases of my views are philosophical, social and personal.

Philosophically, success can be defined in myriad ways. For some, success is an external concept to be measured in terms of high income, huge bank balances, fancy cars, expensive mansions, luxurious holidays and so on. However, in my view, success is a reflection of internal human qualities, such as compassion, kindness, honesty, understanding and more. By this definition, the mere fact of earning a high income does not determine or define success.

Socially, success depends on how we treat other human beings. Do we regard others with respect or do we impose our will on them? Are we mindful of their needs and desires or do we behave selfishly? Do we encourage and support our friends, family and communities or do we insist they only follow the path we think best? It is clear that a critical aspect of success lies in the answers to such questions for they reveal the quality of relationships we share with our fellow human beings.

Personally, success can only be self-defined. My idea of success may not be the same as another person’s vision. This is as it should be. Each of us is a product of diverse social, cultural, economic, political, religious and ideological influences. When we add to that mix the free will that each of us exercises, we can understand clearly how each of us fashions his / her own aspirations for what we consider to be success in our own lives.

In conclusion, success is a concept which can be interpreted in a million different ways. Each individual’s version adds to the richness of our world and makes our planet a more delightful, amazing and colourful place to live.