Moving From Summary to Analysis: Helping Students Write Better

GED® RLA Extended Response

A Workshop by GED Testing Service

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Welcome

Workshop Objectives

- Overview the performance expectations for CR items and scoring
- Explore the teaching of key aspects of the constructed response
- Present a structured approach to tackling a writing task
- Share resources

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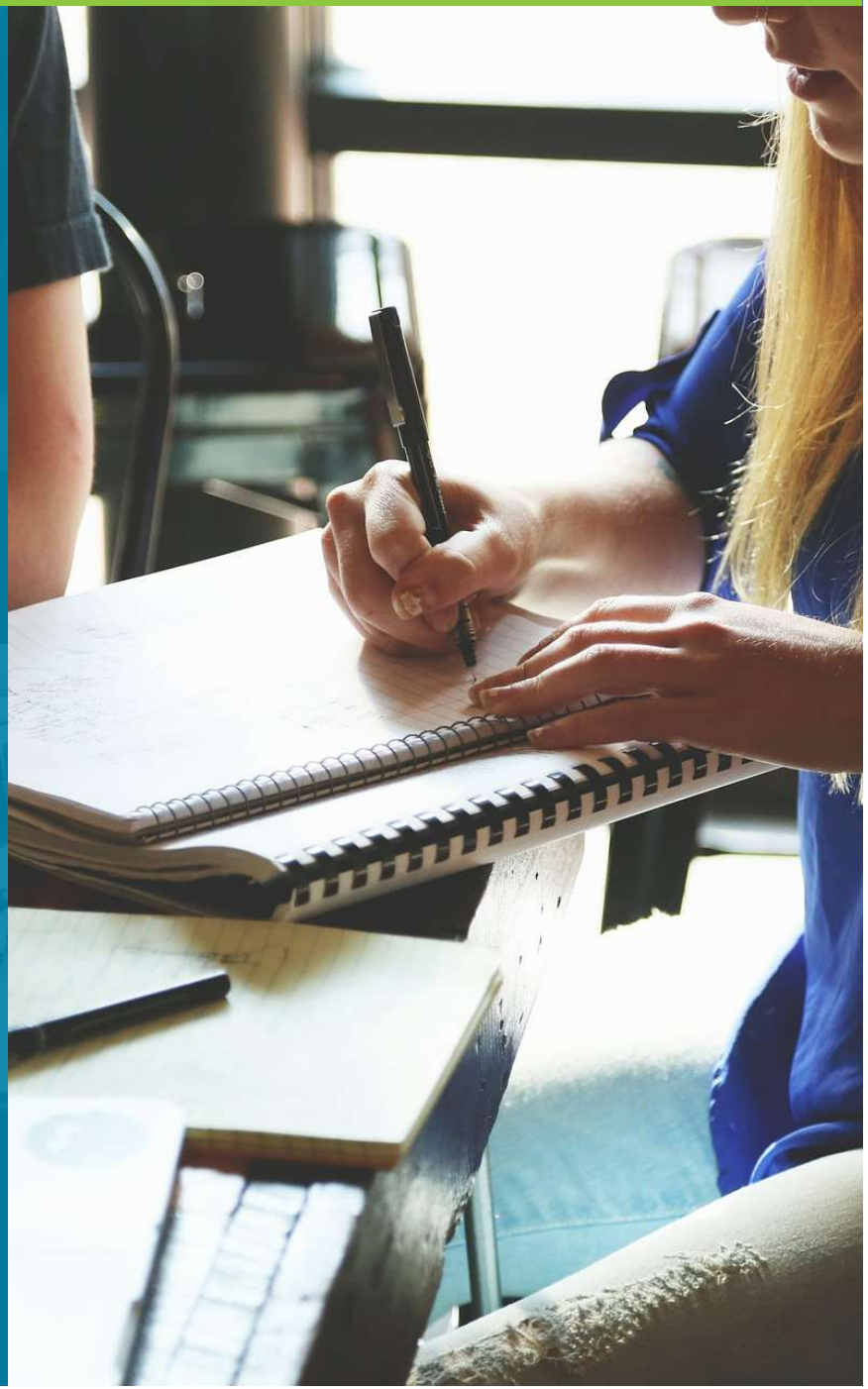
Inquiring Minds Want to Know

RLA Extended Response



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Why Constructed Response?

- CR is the best way of directly assessing
  - Writing skills
  - Higher-order thinking skills
- RLA ER – 45 min., ~20% of test (in terms of *raw score* points)
- And, yes, it is possible to pass without earning score points . . . however, this is **NOT** a good test strategy

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The Urban Legends: Instructor Remix

- Using “I” earns an automatic “0”.
- The Automated Scoring Engine (ASE) must not be working properly with all those zeroes
- “Show us some real student responses . . . There aren’t any real student responses available to use in the classroom”
- There isn’t enough time to complete the task
- Skipping the ER is good test strategy

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The Urban Legends: Student Remix

- NO ONE earns any points on the ER
- You can game the system by using key words and phrases
- Forty-five minutes isn't enough time to read, plan, and write
- The instructions don't tell you what you have to do
- There is definitely a "right" answer—they are just not admitting it

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Constructed Response Items and Scoring

- Can you pass the RLA test and score a “0” on the ER item?
  - Yes, but most test-takers who pass at HSE do get some score points
  - The ER is designed to measure skills at the higher HSE levels and CCR levels
  - Many test-takers still do not understand the ER task
- GEDTS conducted research into how to best explain the task and what is required; some modifications will be made

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Constructed Response Items and Scoring

- Why should I spend time on teaching writing skills if students don't need many points on writing to pass the test?
  - Writing skills are one of the critical differentiators of long-term success
  - Building skills in this area helps develop thinking skills that impact performance on the entire test
  - Any score point earned counts towards the overall score

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What Is Effective in Tackling the ER?

- Higher-order thinking skills (critical thinking and reasoning with a dash of problem solving)
- Effective “close reading”
- Sufficient understanding of the task to produce writing that is text- and evidence-based
- Familiarity with the test interface and basic keyboarding skills

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Text-Based Writing Requires . . .

- Proficient reading skills (at a minimum)
- Organized thinking processes to enable **analyzing** and **evaluating**
- Ability to recognize and write about evidence
- A routine (an effective habit) that becomes a "go-to"
- Sufficient practice

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CR Drivers (aka the Three Traits)

CR requires . . .

1. **"Use of Evidence" (Arguments and Use of Evidence)**
2. **"Ways of Expressing Meaning" (Ideas and Organizational Structure)**
3. **"Language Conventions and Usage" (Grammar & Sentence Structure)**

to respond to the prompt . . .

- "In your response, ***analyze*** both positions presented to determine which one is better supported. Use ***relevant and specific evidence*** from the article to support your response."

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RLA ER Requires Students to . . .

- "Closely" read text that is
  - more complex
  - greater in length
- Determine what is explicitly stated
- Draw specific comparisons between two texts
- Distinguish between valid arguments and faulty reasoning
- Distinguish between supported and unsupported claims
- Make logical inferences based on evidence
- Draw relevant and sufficient evidence from the texts

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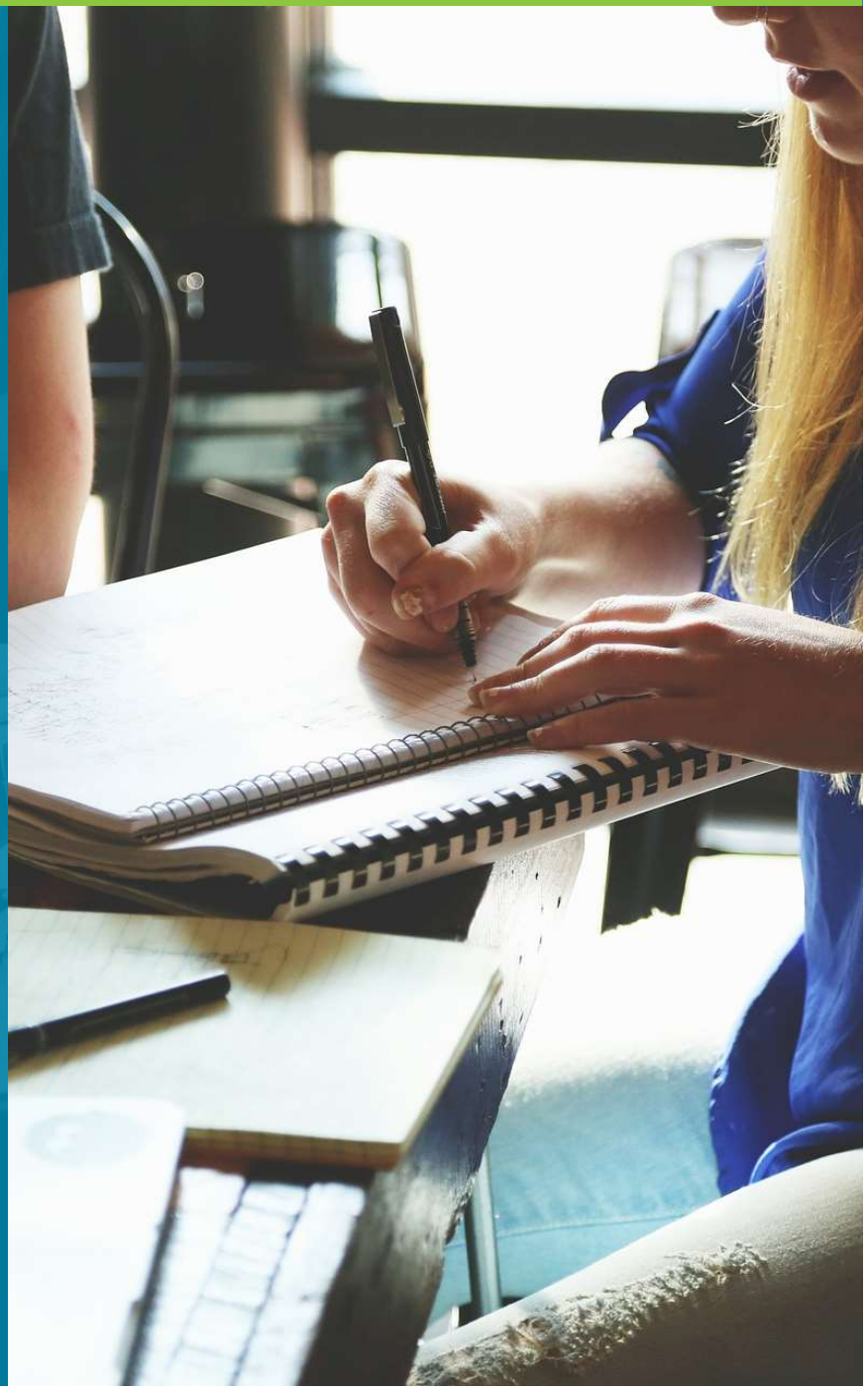
Sharing Findings

Test-Taker Performance: What We've Found



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Extended Response Pilot Study

The Study was the result of

- Listening to educators that students' weren't excelling since launch
- Investigating potential causes, including misunderstanding of
  - Task itself
  - Scoring criteria
  - Meaning of "analysis" and "evaluation"

GEDTS decided to

- Design a series of studies with cognitive labs
  - Collected data in November 2015
- Invite students from multiple locations in several categories to participate
  - took RLA and passed
  - took RLA and failed
  - had not tested yet

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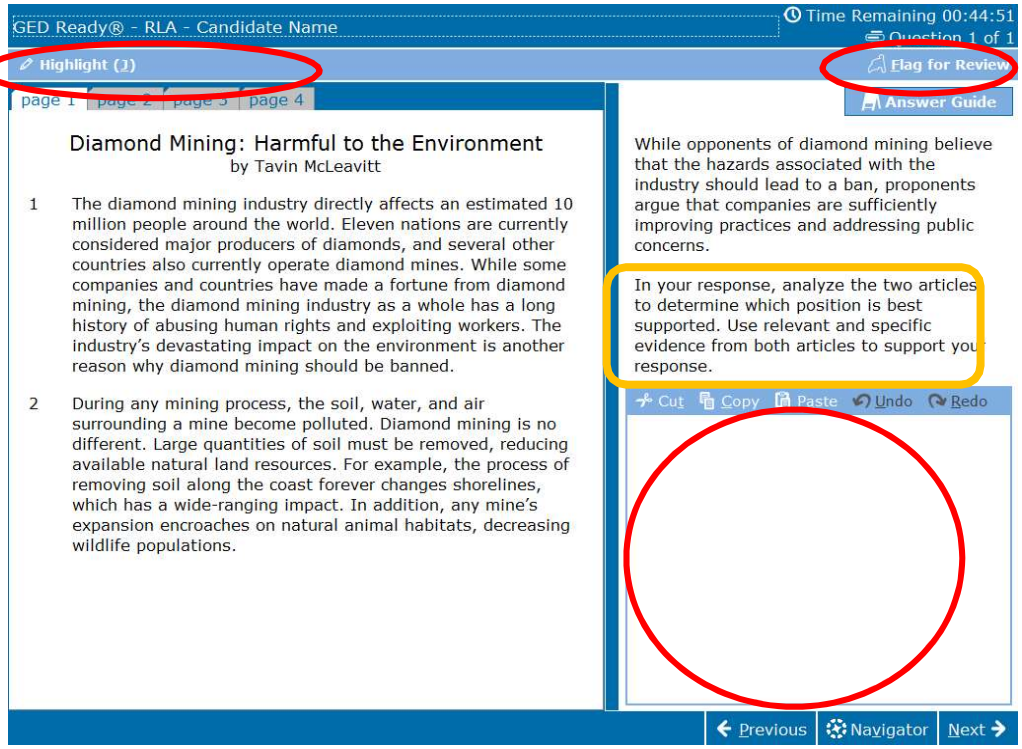
Pilot Study Research Questions

- Do test takers
  - Understand what they need to do to complete the task?
  - Comfortably interact with the computer?
    - Use the space in the response box?
    - Use the onscreen Answer Guidelines?
    - Navigate the tabs successfully?
  - Prepare for the test?
    - Have a MYGED® account?
    - Use the resources on GED.com?



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Pilot Study Findings

Test-takers generally

- Do understand
  - Not to write their opinion and
  - The need to use evidence from the passages
- Don't understand
  - What the task wants them to do ("to analyze" means "to read")
  - That they need to explain WHY the evidence they choose was the best to support the stronger argument

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Pilot Study Findings

Test-takers generally

- Are comfortable with using computers
  - But are subtly influenced by the screen format to write responses that are too short

- Lack awareness of test preparation
  - Don't make use of Tutorial, Answer Guidelines, Noteboards

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New Study Research Questions and Materials

Do test takers

- Understand what they need to do to complete the task?
- Comfortably interact with the computer interface?
- Prepare for the test?

- Created Instructional presentation
  - https://youtu.be/c8Gg-yknu9Y
- Reformatted the Extended Response Prompt and box
- Invited ABE students vs. Non-ABE students
- Structured interview questions to better understand our test takers

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Findings

Avid Mobile users

Positive Feedback on Short Instructional Video

Looking for online tools (Study Guide)

Guided Scaffolding (Score Report Personalized Study Guide)

Positive Outcomes to Resized Box

Clearly Understood Revised Instructions

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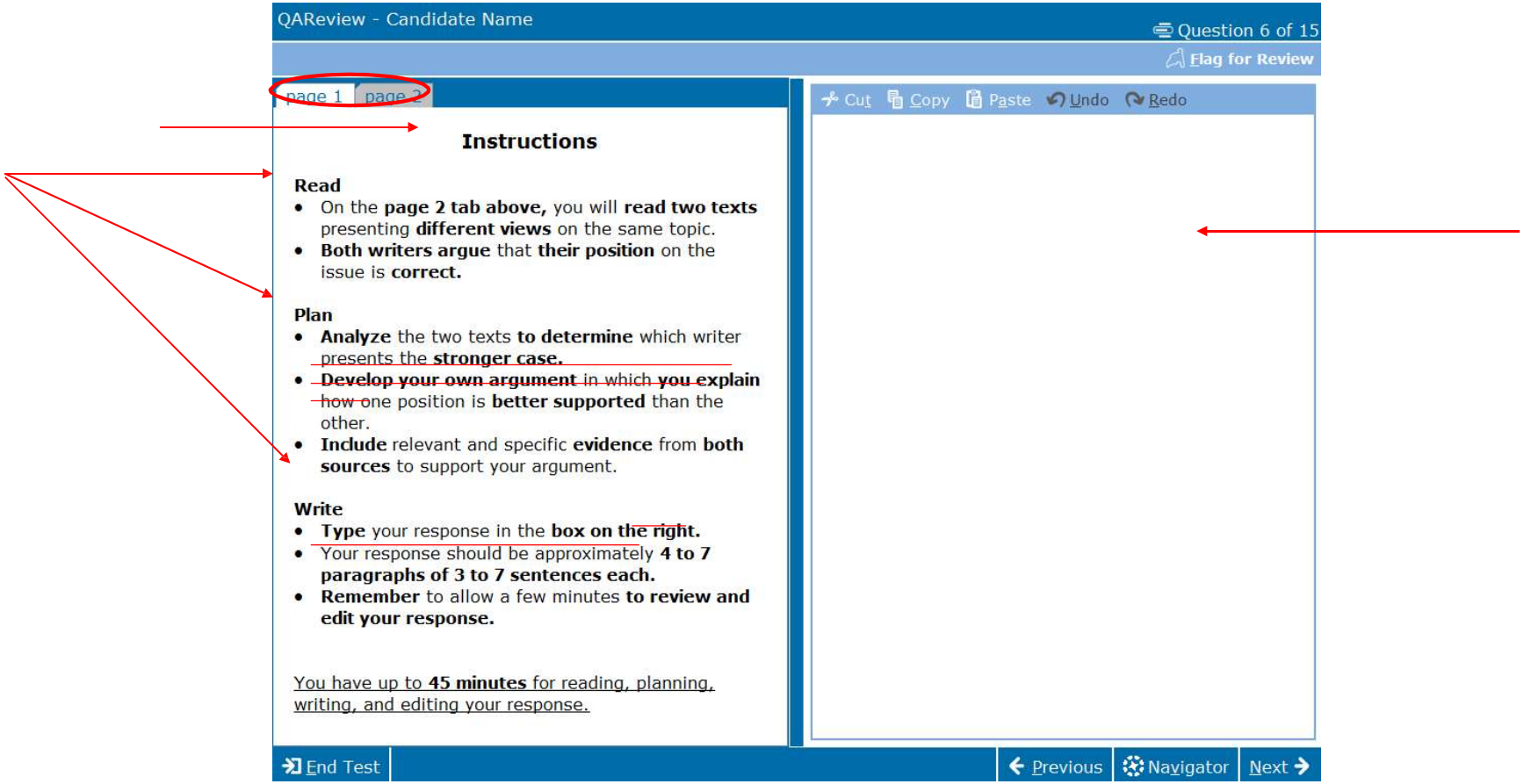
January 2019 Release in English and Spanish



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Why Are Students Struggling?

- Not utilizing an outline or plan from which to write
- Not taking a structured approach to the task
- Not writing enough to be scored (still!)
- Not fully utilizing the available time (45 minutes)

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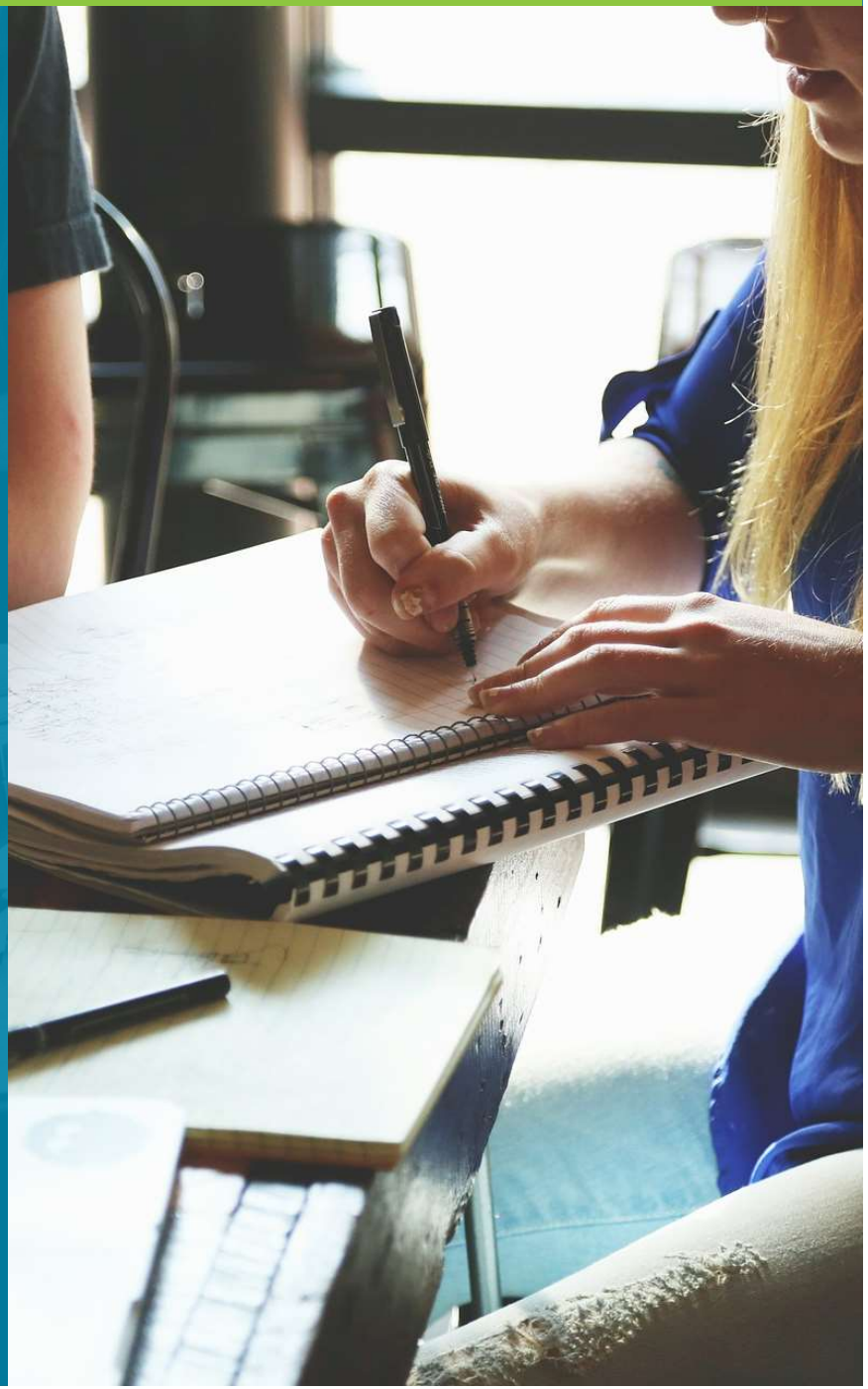
From Struggling to Successful

	Struggling Writers	Successful Writers
Plan	• Are unaware of purpose or process of writing • Have little or no knowledge of the text structure of an essay • Have difficulty developing plans and staying focused on the topic • Experience greater writing anxiety and decreased motivation	• Analyze the task • Understand and apply all the elements of an essay • Create goals for their writing • Develop plans to achieve their goals • Discuss how and why a plan will work
Organize	• Produce fewer ideas • Fail to organize their thoughts	• Develop multiple ideas • Organize their ideas
Draft/write	• Plan what they are going to say as they write • Use imprecise and nonspecific vocabulary • Struggle to convey their thoughts, ideas, and opinions • Write fewer sentences • Focus on mechanics rather than on clarity and organization	• Write using an organized plan, but adjust goals when obstacles arise • Use vocabulary accurately • Experience fewer difficulties with the elements of an essay • Generate sentences that support their ideas
Edit and Revise	• Experience problems with grammar, punctuation, and spelling • Place words and letters too close or too far from each other • Do not review and make correction	• Edit spelling, capitalization, and punctuation • Make more content revisions • Correct overall appearance

A Few Insights to Improve Student Performance

What Earns Points



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What Earns Points

- Going beyond merely stating which side is better supported
  - A single statement of a stance is considered insufficient
  - Needs to include the “why”
- Doing more than just using quotations
  - Evidence cited must support the overall message and must be analyzed in some way

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Evidence in Text Sources

Type of Evidence	Definition
Factual	Truthful statements that cannot be denied. Statements that the average person may know or which can be proven.
Statistics or Data	Numerical facts; can be presented in raw numbers, percentages, or fractions.
Examples or Anecdotes	Real-life situations, events, or experiences that illustrate a position; anecdotal stories that help explain an author's claim.
Expert Testimony	The observations or conclusion of someone who is considered highly knowledgeable because he/she is an expert in a particular field of study or occupation; someone who has firsthand knowledge and experience.
Logical Reasoning	An explanation which draws conclusions that the reader can understand; a discussion which helps the reader understand or make sense out of facts or examples offered.
Emotional Appeal	Use of sympathy, fear, loyalty, etc. to persuade; manipulates the reader's emotions – ethos, pathos, logos.

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Setting the Claim (statement of stance)

This . . .	Instead of . . .
In the argument for daylight savings time, the pro daylight savings position is better supported <u>because the research is more timely and reliable</u>.	They say daylight savings time is a great thing.
Between the two positions arguing whether or not Daylight Saving Time (DST) is useful in terms of energy consumption and safety, the argument in favor of DST is better supported because it uses more factual evidence.	The changing to daylight saving time twice a year is quite confusing to a lot of people, especially at the time right before and after the change.

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What Earns Points

- **Analyzing** the issue or the quality of the argument through which both sides are presented
  - Evidence cited must support overall message **and** must be analyzed in some way

- Demonstrating that the test-taker has *engaged with the text* and has *created a text-based argument*

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Interact with Text – Analyze

Purpose/Context	What is the text about? What type of text is it? What overall purpose does the text serve?
Author	Who is the author of the text? What qualifies him/her to write on this subject?
Audience	Where does the text appear? What does the author expect the reader to do or think based on the argument/information presented?
Proof/Evidence	What type of evidence is provided? Is more than one type of evidence provided? Is evidence provided for both sides of an argument?
Organization/ Structure/Style	What is the organization of the text? What is the tone? What type of sentence structure/complexity, figurative language, rhetorical questions are used?

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Analyze, (Evaluate), and Engage

This . . .	Instead of . . .
In the argument for daylight savings time, it seems that the pro daylight savings time position has won. The first article brings up several improvements in the daily lives of Americans which daylight savings time brings about. The article then uses studies and large scale research to support its position. In the second article, only smaller scale studies are used, and the writer uses arguments with no factual basis to support anti-daylight savings positions.	The changing to daylight saving time twice a year is quite confusing to a lot of people, especially at the time right before and after the change. A person can become upset when they forget to change their clock each time. More accidents can also happen in rushing, when you forget to change all of your clocks.

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What to Avoid

Responses should not

- Be composed of a summary of the passage or authors' positions
- Include personal information (e.g. opinion)
- Be written in first person (let's discuss why)

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Examples

Summarization

If those are the arguments that are made, then people just need to be more responsible if they are having trouble adjusting with the time change.

Personal Information

Back when it was thought of it made sense – but times have changed and now its time to not have it.

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Expectations for Constructed Response

When you write . . .

- **determine which position presented** in the passage(s) is **better supported** by evidence from the passage(s)
- **explain why the position you chose is the better-supported one**
- **remember, the better-supported position is not necessarily the position you agree with**
- **defend your assertions with multiple pieces of evidence** from the passage(s)
- **build your main points thoroughly**

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Simple Techniques to Improve Scores

Expose students to a structured approach to the writing task and help them understand that they need to:

- Write a complete response (300-500 words), not just a short paragraph
- Provide commentary on the evidence cited (explain the “why”)
- Develop two or three ideas fully, rather than mention a lot of things without detail
- Leave five minutes at the end for proofreading

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"Stuff to Teach"

- Writing about what is read (Hint: Practice, practice, practice!)
- Using a plan (e.g,. a graphic organizer or an outline) for organizing the information from the reading and then writing about it
- Bringing good grammar to the writing task
- Answering the question that is asked

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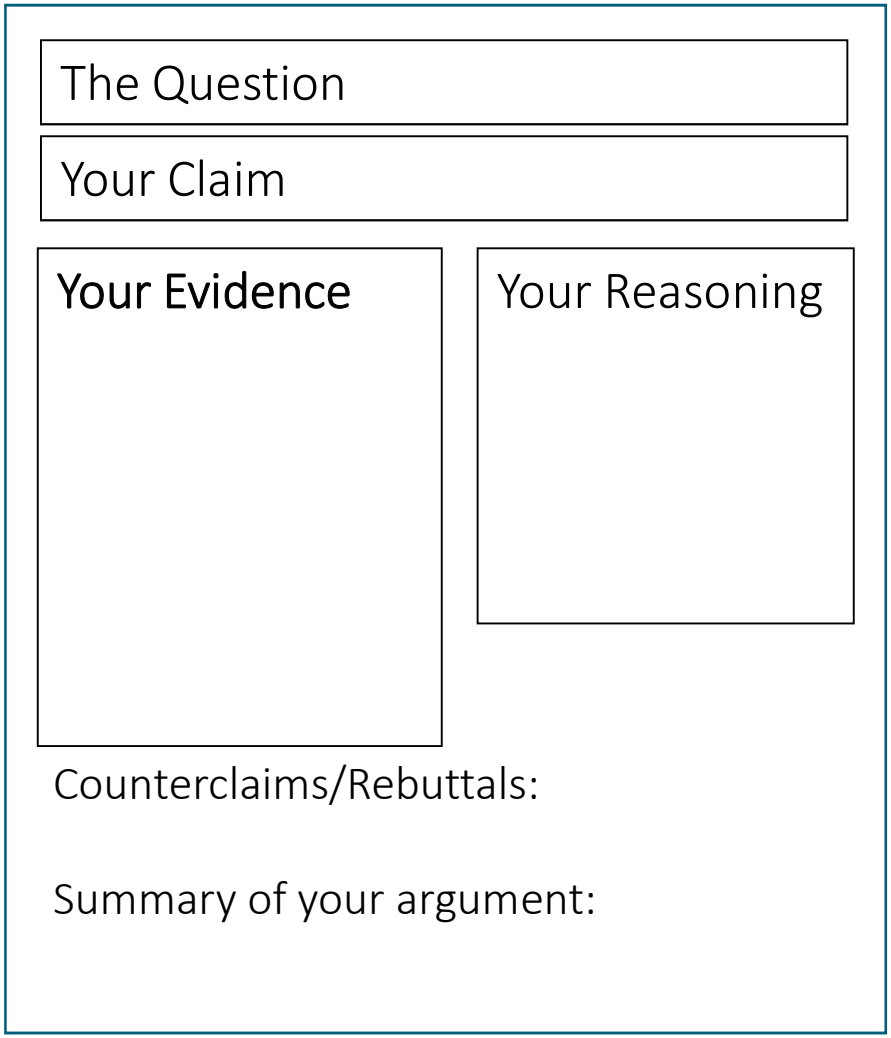
Written Argument in the Classroom



- Evaluate data
- Make a claim
- List evidence and reasoning
- Identify counterclaims and provide rebuttals

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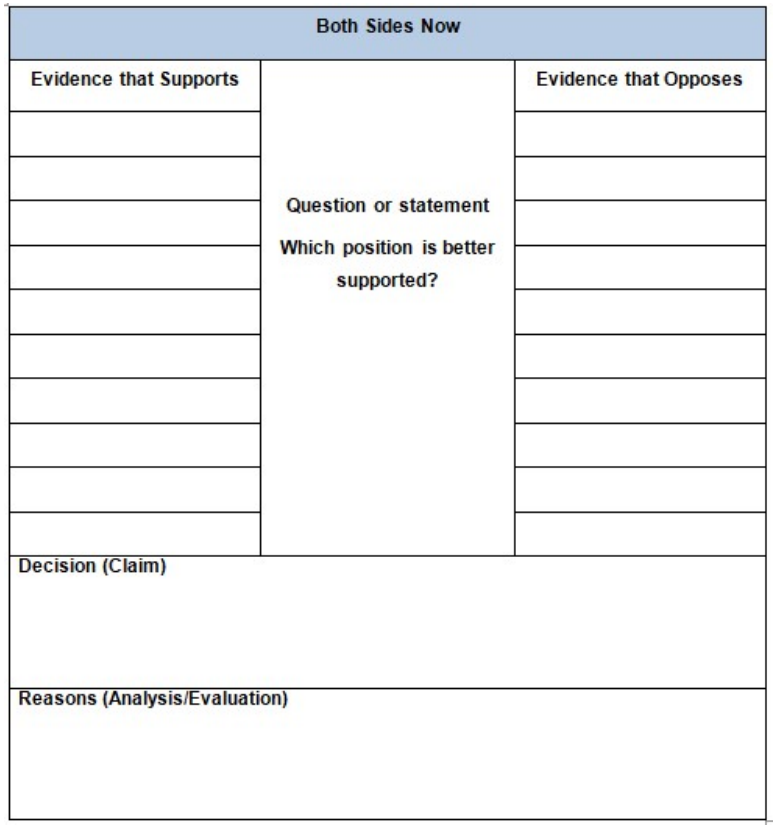
Both Sides Now



Both Sides Now		
Evidence that Supports	Question or statement Which position is better supported?	Evidence that Opposes
Decision (Claim)		
Reasons (Analysis/Evaluation)		

Students should

- List the evidence that supports
- List the evidence that opposes
- Evaluate the evidence
- Select the position that is better supported
- Provide reasons why (analysis/evaluation)

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Keep it Simple!

Beginning

- The introduction states the main idea or position. It begins with a topic sentence/thesis statement. The beginning restates the question and sets the stage to answer the prompt.

Middle

- Answer the question first.
- Provide important information the author stated and meant. This is where you go to the text(s) and provide examples/evidence and important details to support the answer.
- Sample phrases to introduce each text reference include: … stated; in the text …; for example . . .
- Include background information as required through the prompt.

Ending

- Write a closing that summarizes the position taken or restates the thesis statement in a different way.

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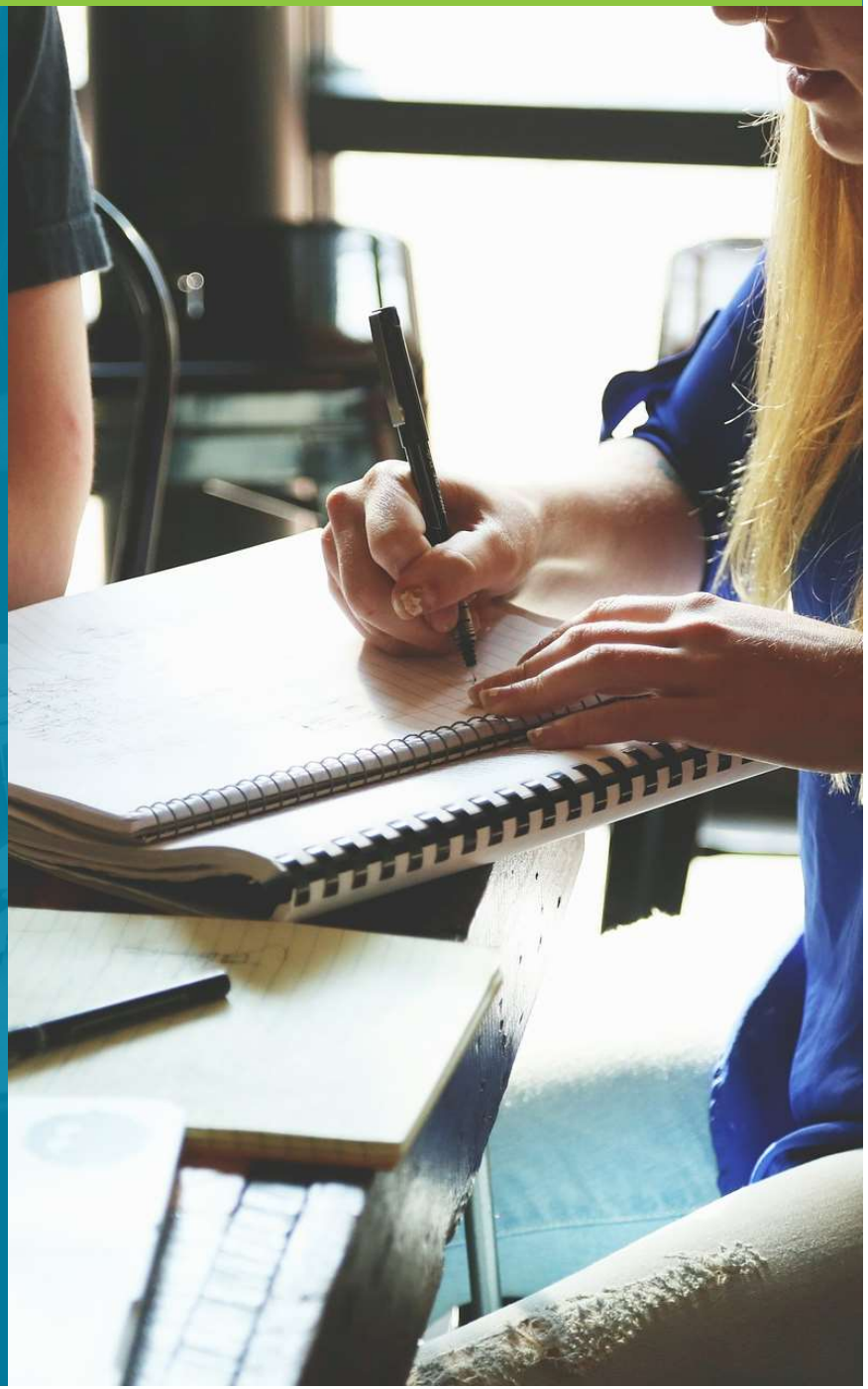
Dig Deeper into Students' Writing Samples

Using the Electronic Scoring Tool



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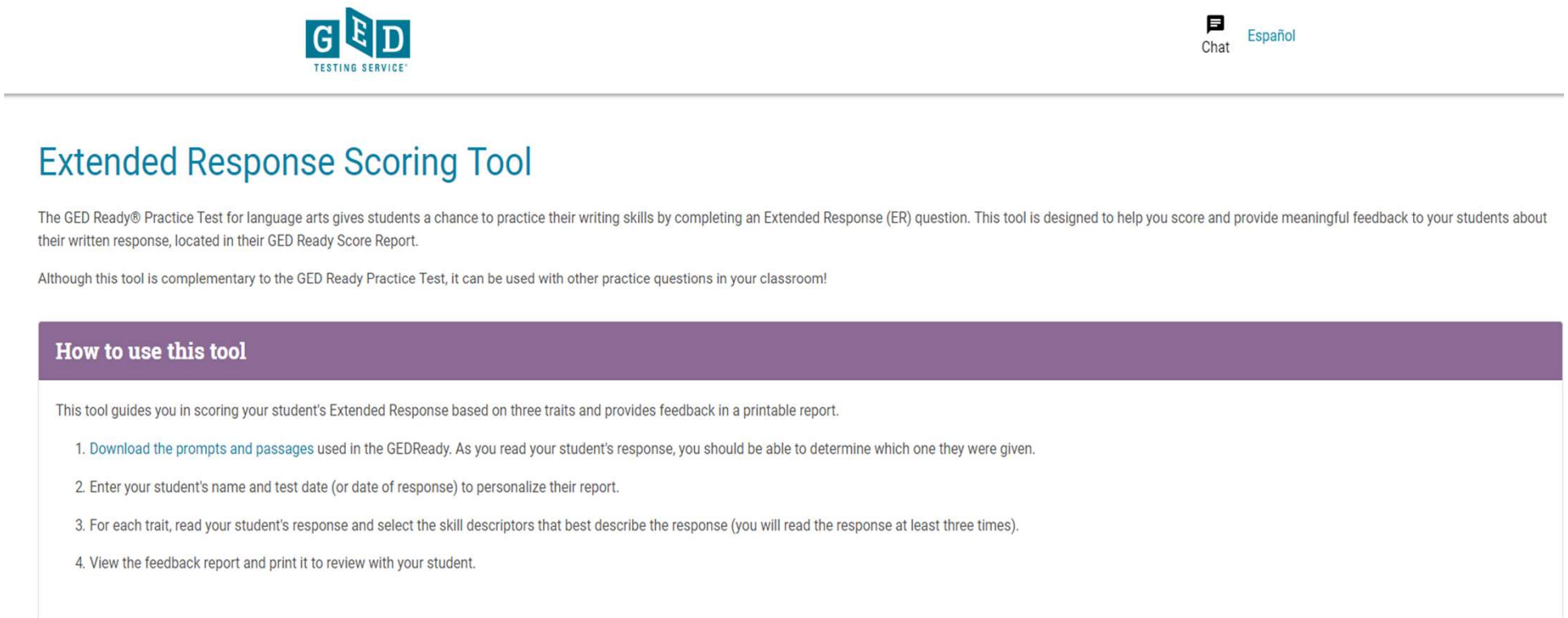
New Scoring Tool!



https://ged.com/educators_admins/teaching/classroom_materials/er_scoring_tools/

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How the Template Works

Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence

Read your student's response, then choose the skill descriptor in each row that best describes their response.

Generates text-based argument(s) and establishes a purpose that is connected to the prompt		
Score 0	**Score 1**	**Score 2**
No clearly-stated claims or not applicable	At least one clearly-stated or strongly implied claim	Explicit and clearly stated claim or claims
Attempted claims are vague and/or illogical and/or not text-based or not applicable	At least one claim is logical and text-based- Additional claims may be tied to the larger issue rather being based on a close reading of the text	Claims are logical and based on a close reading of the text
Attempted claims are vague and/or do not support an overall stance or not applicable	Implied or clearly-stated claims may support an overall stance, but the stance may be vague, unclear, or inconsistent	Explicit claims support a clear and consistent stance

- Breaks down each dimension within a trait
- These dimensions are those that *trained scorers* may consider in scoring each of the three traits

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Multiple Reads ARE Necessary

- When you review a document…<u>you</u> don't read for organization, grammar, typos, and overall development of ideas simultaneously
- You will need to read at least once for each trait
- It becomes *easier* the more you practice
- The goal is to internalize the process and the characteristics of each trait.

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Things to Keep in Mind

- Each test-taker receives three scores—one for each trait in the rubric
- Although each trait is broken down into sub-dimensions, the trait score is determined holistically
- When you use the resource guides and study the annotations, you'll see offsets—high levels in some sub-dimensions balanced by lower levels in others

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Additional Considerations

- Each trait score is determined by the *quality* of the writing
- A response that receives a score of 2 on Trait 1 (Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence) may have a few elements that seem consistent with a 1-level response.
- Because the response is so strong in other elements, it can still receive an **on-balance** score of 2 for Trait 1.

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Overview: The Three Traits

- Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and the Use of Evidence
- Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure
- Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

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Why Focus on Trait 1?

- Is pivotal from a skills perspective
- Builds a solid foundation for cross-cutting skills
- Provides the basis for demonstrating Trait 2 (organization and development of ideas) and Trait 3 (standard English conventions)

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Remember the Prompt

Prompt:
Analyze the arguments presented in the press release and the letter to the editor.

In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

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Chat Español

Extended Response Scoring Tool

The GED Ready® Practice Test for language arts gives students a chance to practice their writing skills by completing an Extended Response (ER) question. This tool is designed to help you score and provide meaningful feedback to your students about their written response, located in their GED Ready Score Report.

Although this tool is complementary to the GED Ready Practice Test, it can be used with other practice questions in your classroom!

How to use this tool

This tool guides you in scoring your student's Extended Response based on three traits and provides feedback in a printable report.

1. Download the prompts and passages used in the GEDReady. As you read your student's response, you should be able to determine which one they were given.
2. Enter your student's name and test date (or date of response) to personalize their report.
3. For each trait, read your student's response and select the skill descriptors that best describe the response (you will read the response at least three times).
4. View the feedback report and print it to review with your student.

Candidate Name: Best Student Test Date: 02/05/2019

START SCORING

What a Difference a Claim Makes

Response 3:

I feel that Representative Walls position was better supported because she had a lot of good points. ---- Representative Walls has my support.

Response 7:

Representative Melody Walls' announcement was more strongly supported than the letter to the Oak Falls Gazette Editor by Alice Jenkins. ----The announcement by Representative Walls had a vast assortment of facts ranging from job opportunities and noise in the tow to traffic congestion.

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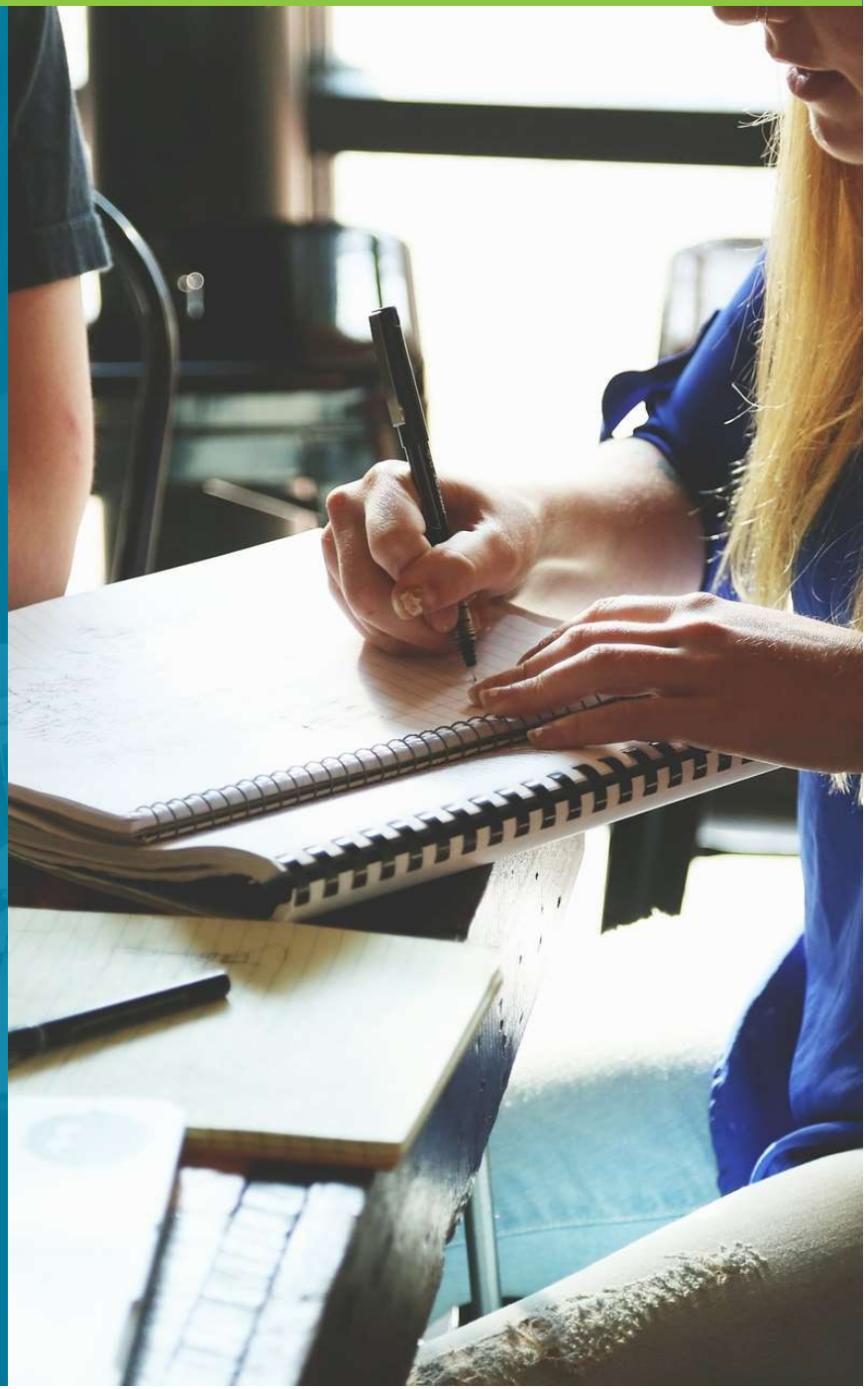
Final Thoughts

Better Readers Make Better Writers



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Success Begins with Reading

- Although it may appear counterintuitive, writing success begins with reading proficiency.
- Time constraints often result in our going directly to teaching writing without a necessary parallel focus on reading.
- You **CAN** teach a proficient reader how to be a proficient writer; trying to teach reluctant readers to be a proficient writers can feel like pushing a boulder uphill.

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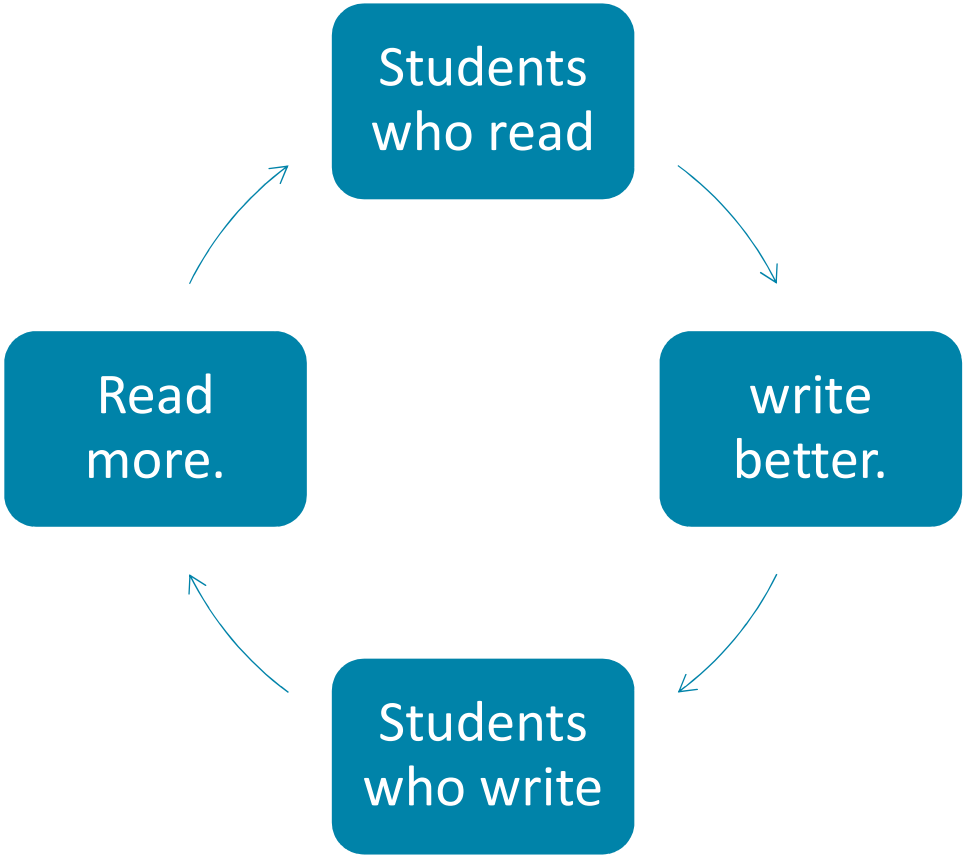
The Link Between Reading and Writing



- Reading strategies should lead to writing
- Writing strategies should encourage further reading

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Resources

What Drives Argumentative Writing?

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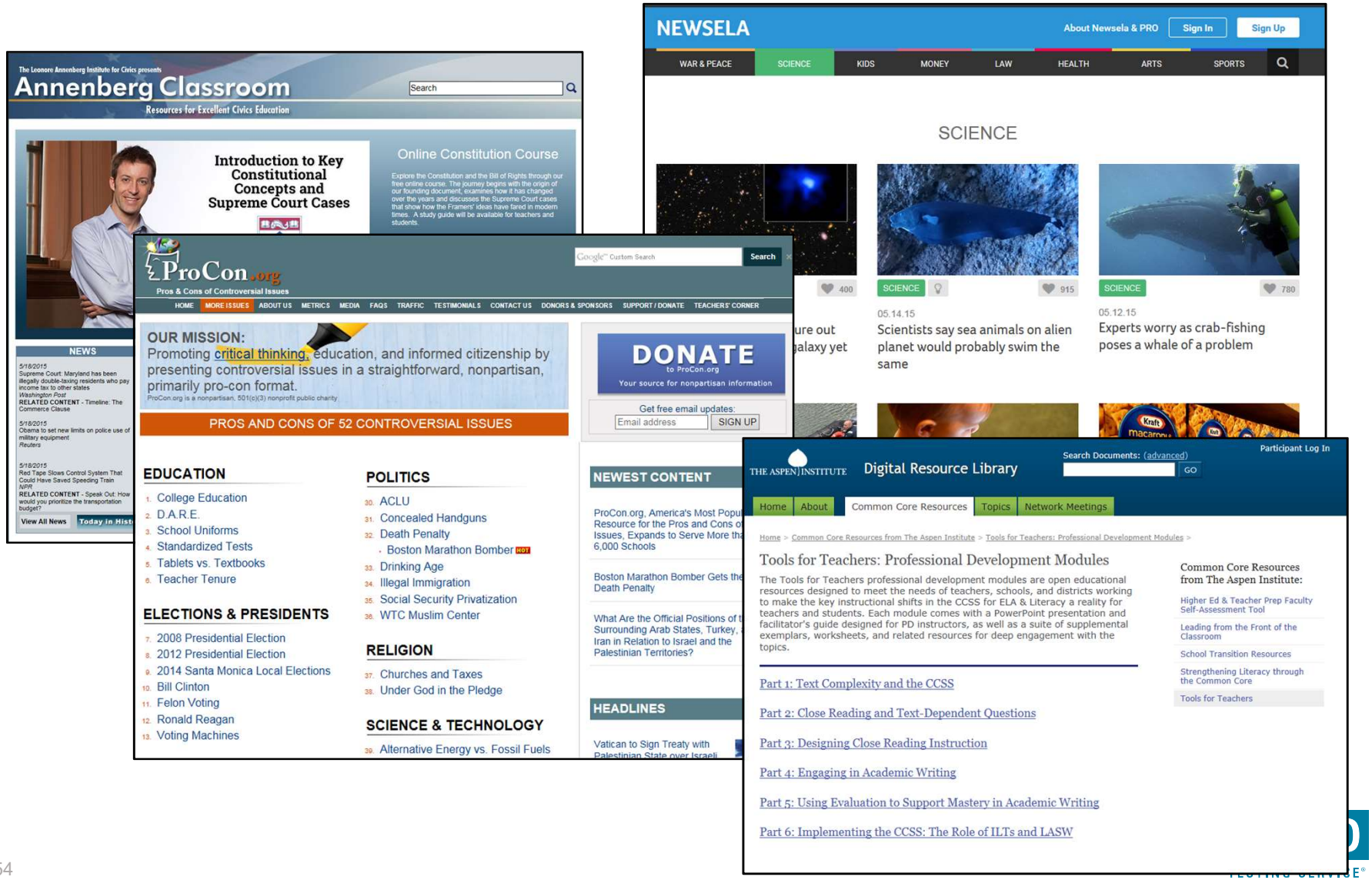
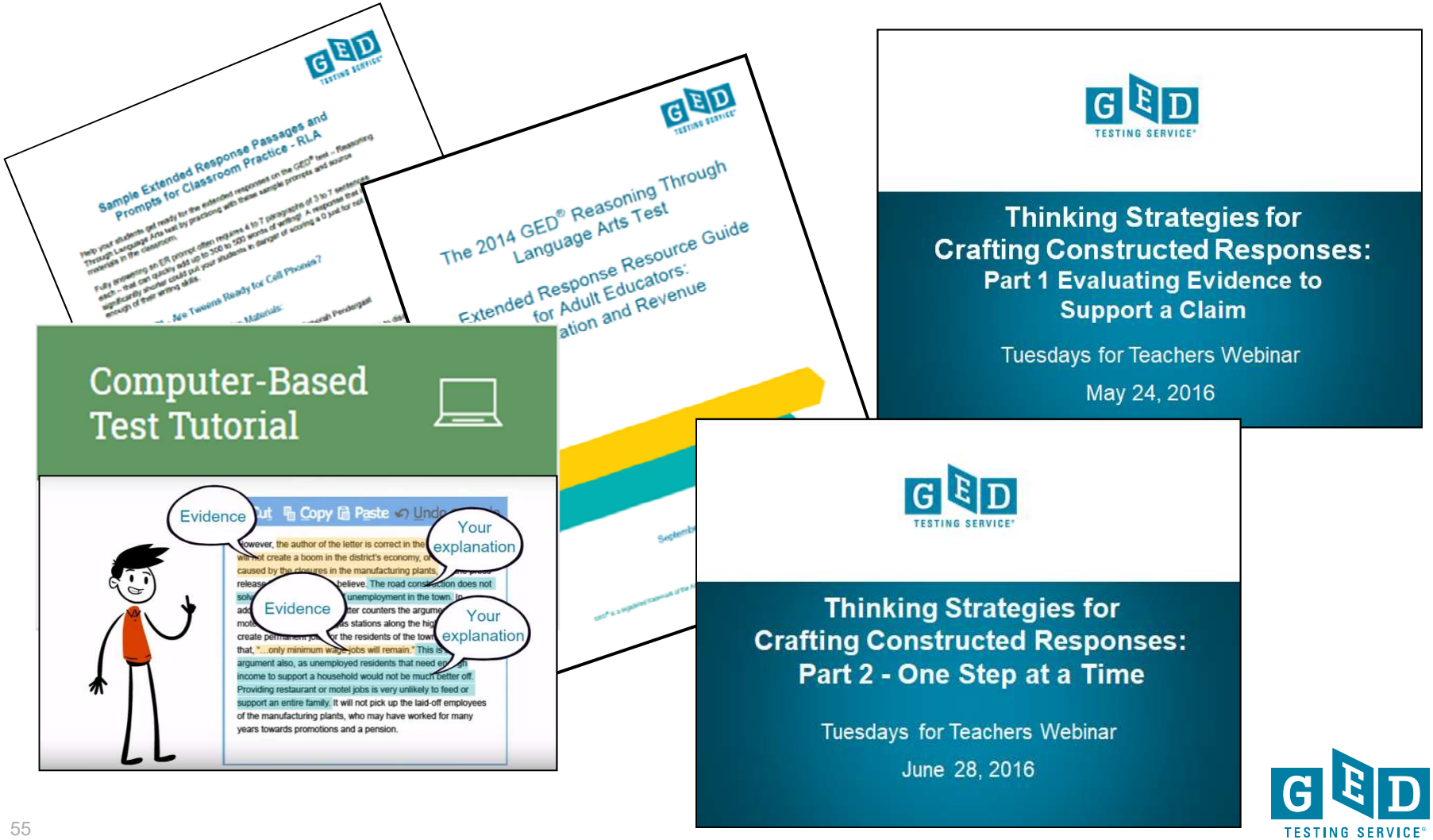
Access Online Reading Materials



Access Previous Webinars and More

https://ged.com/educators_admins/program/



Q & A

Thank you!

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