

# **Writing Effective Extended Responses on the GED RLA Test – It's All About the Claim!**

**2020 COABE Conference**

**Presented by Susan Pittman and Debi Faucette**



# Welcome



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# In this session, we will...

- Discuss the importance of evidence-based writing in academic and work settings
- Review the traits of an effective claim
- Explore ways to help students understand elements of effective claims
- Explore ways to help students rewrite/revise their claims
- Share resources



# It Depends on Your Perception

**Figure 1: Employer vs. Student Perception of Proficiency in Career Readiness Competencies, by Percentage of Respondents**



Competency	% of Employers That Rated Recent Grads Proficient*	% of Students Who Considered Themselves Proficient**
Professionalism/Work Ethic	42.5%	89.4%
Oral/Written Communications	41.6%	79.4%
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	55.8%	79.9%
Teamwork/Collaboration	77.0%	85.1%
Leadership	33.0%	70.5%
Digital Technology	65.8%	59.9%
Career Management	17.3%	40.9%
Global/Intercultural Fluency	20.7%	34.9%

Source: *Job Outlook 2018* (N=201 employing organizations) and *The Class of 2017 Student Survey Report* (N=4,213 graduating seniors), National Association of Colleges and Employers

\*The percentages corresponding to "rated proficient" represent, among all responding employers, the percentage who, on a 5-point scale, rated recent graduates either "very" (4) or "extremely" (5) proficient in the respective competency.

\*\*The percentages corresponding to "considered proficient" represent, among all responding graduating seniors from the Class of 2017, the percentage who, on a 5-point scale, considered himself/herself either "very" (4) or "extremely" (5) proficient in the respective competency.

# What Employers Want!

- According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, **73.4% of employers** want a candidate with strong written communication skills.
- Written communication was the number three most desired quality overall, behind leadership skills and ability to work as a team member.

*"If you are trying to decide among a few people to fill a position, hire the best writer. [His/her] writing skills will pay off. That's because being a good writer is about more than writing clear writing. Clear writing is a sign of clear thinking. Great writers know how to communicate. They make things easy to understand. They can put themselves in someone else's shoes. They know what to omit. And those are qualities you want in any candidate. Writing is making a comeback all over our society...Writing is today's currency for good ideas."*

-Jason Fried, *Rework*



# Think About It!

Your supervisor asked you to review Zoom and BlueJeans video conferencing systems. She wants your recommendations on which system to purchase. She provided you with the following link to review:

<https://www.uctoday.com/collaboration/video-conferencing/bluejeans-vs-zoom-which-video-conferencing-should-you-choose/>

You reviewed the info and even tried out both systems. Now, you must write up your recommendations.

**Claim First Draft:** I recommend that the company purchase Zoom Enterprise.

**Claim Second Draft:** After a careful review of Zoom and BlueJeans, I recommend the purchase of Zoom Enterprise because it is better.

**Claim Third Draft:** After a review of Zoom and BlueJeans, Zoom is the better choice for our company because it offers more features, opportunities for expansion, and a higher level of support.

# Learning to Write Effective Claims...

- Helps students sharpen their close reading skills
- Helps them learn to focus on the evidence provided
- Requires that they make a decision and stick with it
- Requires that they use evidence to support the decision
- Requires that they use higher cognitive skills



# Opinion versus Argument/Arguable Claim

1. Krispy Kreme doughnuts are delicious.
2. I like dance music.
3. The current mayor is not competent.

- Krispy Kreme doughnuts taste better than other donuts because of their texture, sweet glaze, and golden appearance.
- Dance music comes in many forms and is popular because of the clear, fast beats that get people up and moving.
- The current mayor is clearly incompetent because he has mishandled money, spent time on frivolous causes, and never listens to the people he is supposed to serve.



# An Effective Claim

- Must be arguable but stated as a fact. It *must be debatable with inquiry and evidence; it is not a personal opinion or feeling.*
- A claim is supported by evidence.
- A claim defines your writing's goals, direction, and scope.
- The best claims are focused, specific, complex, and relevant.



# Stimulus Material

## Let's Review!

### Taxation and Revenue Stimulus Material

#### Taxation and Revenue Stimulus Passage #1

Press Release from the Office of  
U.S Representative Melody Walls  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC

*Representative Walls Announces Economic Boost for 12<sup>th</sup> District  
July 17, 2013*

Washington, DC – Representative Melody Walls announced that Congress passed the highway and transit bill today.

"This bill funds the expansion of Highway 17 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane thoroughfare. It will positively affect the town of Oak Falls," Walls said. As part of the expansion, Highway 17 will move two miles east of the town of Oak Falls. The bill will ease traffic congestion and create job opportunities during and after construction.

Last year, Representative Walls held town hall meetings to gather opinions from her constituents about revitalizing the economy in the 12<sup>th</sup> District. Two years ago, Turnaround Motors and Bell Camera closed their factory doors. The result has been high unemployment with no immediate prospects for new businesses. Representative Walls heard residents' concerns for jobs in the district.

Improving the highway means jobs for local construction workers. Once completed, the highway will bring more long-distance travelers into the area. Some officials anticipate a 30% increase in highway traffic due to the ease of traveling on the improved Highway 17. An increase in travelers will attract national motel and restaurant chains along the highway route. These national businesses will mean permanent jobs for residents.

In the future, historical features in Oak Falls and Gaston, such as brick streets built by early settlers and the old wheat mill, will likely become popular tourist attractions. More visitors will increase business for local shops and restaurants.

The improved highway will eliminate eighteen-wheeler traffic through towns, a major source of traffic congestion and noise. A 2001 study in Texas showed that bypasses reduce traffic through towns by as much as 75%. Eliminating eighteen-wheeler traffic will also reduce road maintenance costs. The improvement of Highway 17, funded by federal tax allocations, is an important investment in the area.

#### Taxation and Revenue Stimulus Passage #2

Oak Falls Gazette  
Letter to the Editor

I am a small-business owner living in Representative Walls's congressional district. A bill has been passed to expand Highway 17 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane thoroughfare. This change includes plans to move Highway 17 two miles to the east, which means it will now bypass our town completely. I find this unacceptable.

The *Gazette* reports that because Highway 17 runs through six states, construction will be paid for with federal road funds. That means some of our federal taxes will pay for a road that I believe will harm our town. I also believe that few residents of Oak Falls will use the road. Our town and district will lose money as a result of this highway bypass paid for by our tax dollars.

The road construction jobs are only a temporary bandage on the wound made by our two manufacturers closing their doors. Once the road construction is finished, only minimum wage jobs will remain.

In fact, the highway will bypass four cities in our district alone. Each of these towns will lose business because fewer travelers will pass through them and eat, stay overnight, or purchase gas. There is no guarantee that tourists will drive an extra two miles into our town if national chain motels and restaurants are built at the highway exits. The 2001 study Representative Walls references does show that bypasses reduce traffic and noise in towns, but the study also shows they have a negative impact on local businesses.

If this project were paid for with state tax money alone, angry voters would have struck it down. Representative Walls held town hall meetings to hear residents' opinions about the local economy, but obviously she did not listen to the concerns they voiced. Please consider local concerns about this federal project.

#### Taxation and Revenue 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. Your response should contain 4 – 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each, about 300 – 500 words.

# Begin with the End in Mind

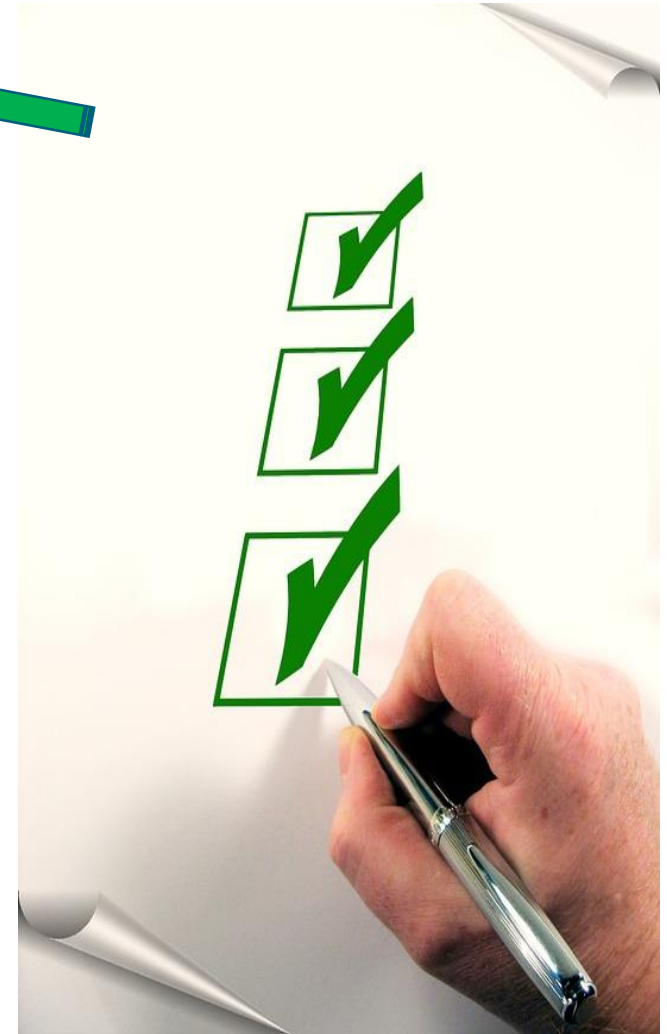
Both the press release and the letter to the editor offer positions that are supported by both fact and opinion. The press release seeks to exhort the new bill for expansion of Highway 17, while the letter argues that the passing of the bill could prove detrimental to the district. While both sides make an acceptable case, the latter provides a stronger argument.

One example of the letter's stronger argument is the explanation that federal tax dollars pay for the road, as it will incorporate six different states, therefore eliminating this particular state's ability to strike the bill down. This proves, with factual information, that the district did not have a fair say in the bill. The notion that few residents will use the road that their tax dollars are providing is an opinion. However, a resident and small-business owner in the town is more credible in the awareness of the town's concern, as compared to a representative who attended a few meetings in the town hall.

Another example of the better supported argument in the letter is the reference to the construction jobs as temporary. The press release praises the new jobs created by the highway construction, as this is a valid point. However, the author of the letter is correct in the fact that the jobs will not create a boom in the district's economy, or fill in the gap caused by the closures in the manufacturing plants, as the press release leads listeners to believe. The road construction does not solve the long-term issue of unemployment in the town. In addition, the author of the letter counters the argument that new motels, restaurants, and gas stations along the highway will create permanent jobs for the residents of the town. She explains that, "...only minimum wage jobs will remain." This is a valid argument also, as unemployed residents that need enough income to support a household would not be much better off. Providing restaurant or motel jobs is very unlikely to feed or support an entire family. It will not pick up the laid-off employees of the manufacturing plants, who may have worked for many years towards promotions and a pension.

Another example of the letter's stronger argument is the author's explanation of the 2001 study. She concedes that the representative is correct in citing that bypasses are proven to reduce noise and traffic in town, but she argues that the study shows a negative effect on local businesses. This piece of the study was not mentioned by Representative Walls or the press release, and it is a proven fact. This draws more credibility to the argument in the letter. Also, although it is a speculation, it is more reasonable that traveler's will stick to the main highway and not venture miles off their path into small town when chain gas stations, restaurants, and motels are conveniently located directly at the highway exits. It is less likely that old roads in the towns will become historical locations, attracting tourists and boosting small business sales.

Despite the argument and evidence given by the press release, it appears that the letter to the editor offers a stronger case. The author's ideas are backed up by logical explanations and facts with a few speculations. Though the press release offers some fact, it is mainly specked with anticipations and hopes, driven to overshadow any doubts and quell any concerns. The letter is penned by a resident of the town and owner of a business, subject to first-hand opinions of the citizens of the district. The press release is pushed by an elected representative who, upon visiting the town a number of times and consulting a small percentage of the constituents, is convinced she understands the majority. Although both parties may very well have the best interests of the district in mind, and either position could be correct, it is clear that the letter provides a better-supported argument.



# What's the Starting Point?

## The claim

- Is the roadmap with signs and markings
- Guides the writer and reader through the argument
- Provides the position taken
- Provides the reason “why”



# Which One Provides the Best Roadmap?

I feel Jenkins has the better argument supported by common sense and enough data to win her argument.

Both the press release and the letter to the editor offer positions that are supported by both fact and opinion. The press release seeks to exhort the new bill for expansion of Highway 17, while the letter argues that the passing of the bill could prove detrimental to the district. While both sides make an acceptable case, the latter provides a stronger argument.

# Which One Provides the Best Roadmap?

I feel Jenkins has the better argument supported by common sense and enough data to win her argument.

Why?

- What constitutes common sense?
- What evidence is related to the common sense?
- Why does the writer mean about “enough data” ?
- What is the starting point?
- Where will the writer go with this claim?
- What about the Representative’s evidence? Any good points?



# Which One Provides the Best Roadmap?

Both the press release and the letter to the editor offer positions that are supported by both fact and opinion. The press release seeks to exhort the new bill for expansion of Highway 17, while the letter argues that the passing of the bill could prove detrimental to the district. While both sides make an acceptable case, the latter provides a stronger argument.

Why?

- The response will explain why the letter writer provides a better-supported argument.
- The response will show why the letter to the editor is more credible than the press release.
- The response will show how the letter writer uses facts to strengthen logical explanations.

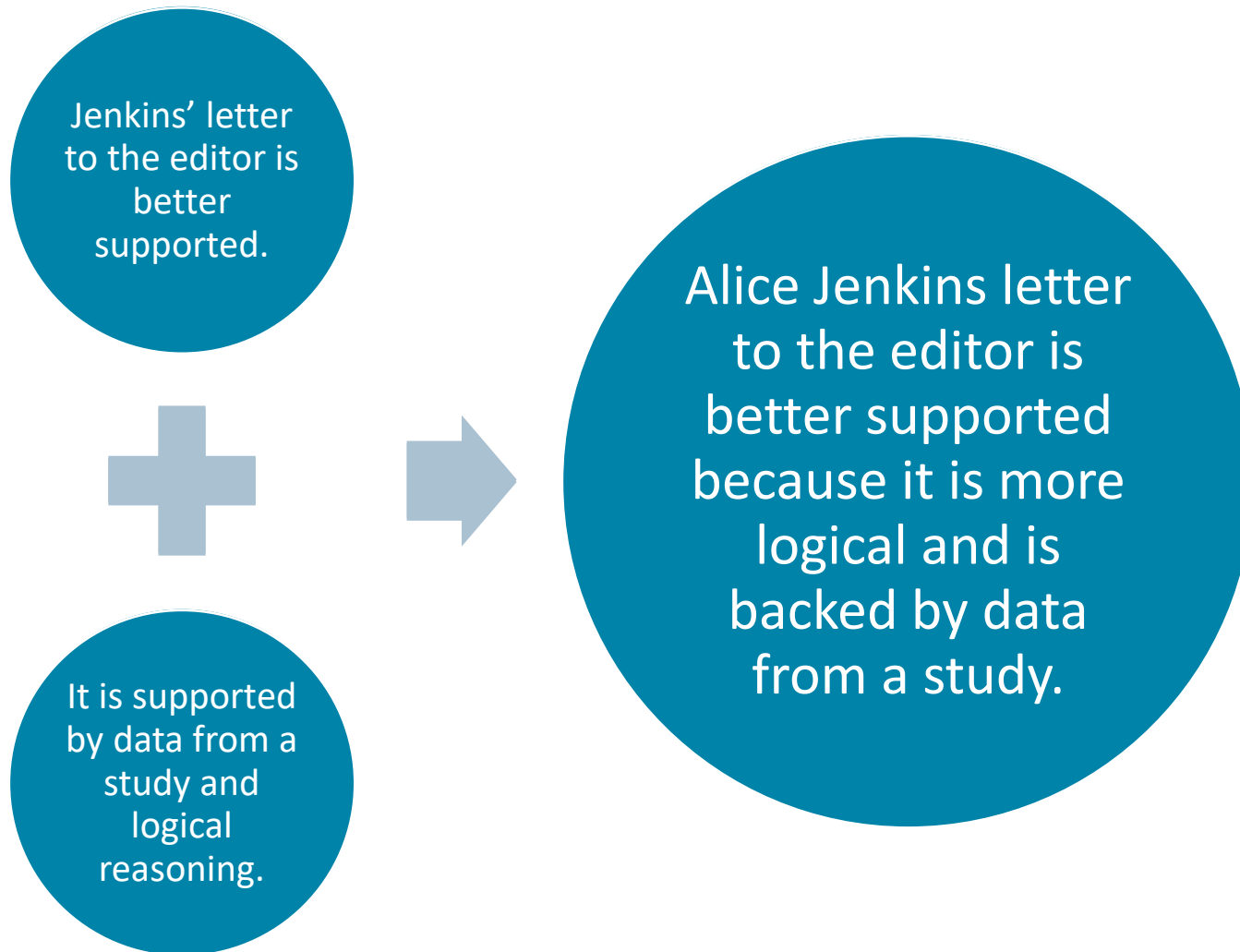
# What Can You Do to Help this Student?

1. Start with the existing claim.
2. Identify what needs to change to make this a better claim.
3. Read through the student's response and identify evidence used.
4. Identify what these pieces of evidence have in common.

I feel Jenkins has the better argument supported by common sense and enough data to win her argument.

- Only minimum wage jobs created.
- Won't replace the jobs that left
- Study says the bypass has a negative impact on local business
- State money would have been voted down
- Just a band aid on the scar left by 2 businesses closing their doors

# Build the New Claim



# Rework the Introduction

## Current Intro

We have 2 opposing viewpoints from Representative Walls and a citizen and business owner, Alice Jenkins, concerning using tax dollars to expand a highway from 2 lanes to 4 lanes.

~~I feel Jenkins has the better argument supported by common sense and enough data to win her the argument.~~

Representative Walls and Alice Jenkins, a citizen and business owner, have opposing viewpoints on expanding a nearby highway from two to four lanes. Both present good arguments about the impact on the town of expanding the nearby highway. Alice Jenkins letter to the editor is better supported because it is more logical and is backed by data from the study.

# Does the Claim Provide a Roadmap?

Response 3:

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

Why?

- What points are good?
- What evidence is related to the “good points”?
- Why does Representative Walls have your support?
- What is your starting point?
- Where will you go with this claim?
- What about the letter to the editor? Any good points?

# Let's Make It Better and Stronger!

1. Start with the existing claim.
2. Identify what needs to change to make this a better claim.
3. Read through the student's response and identify evidence used.
4. Identify what these pieces of evidence have in common.

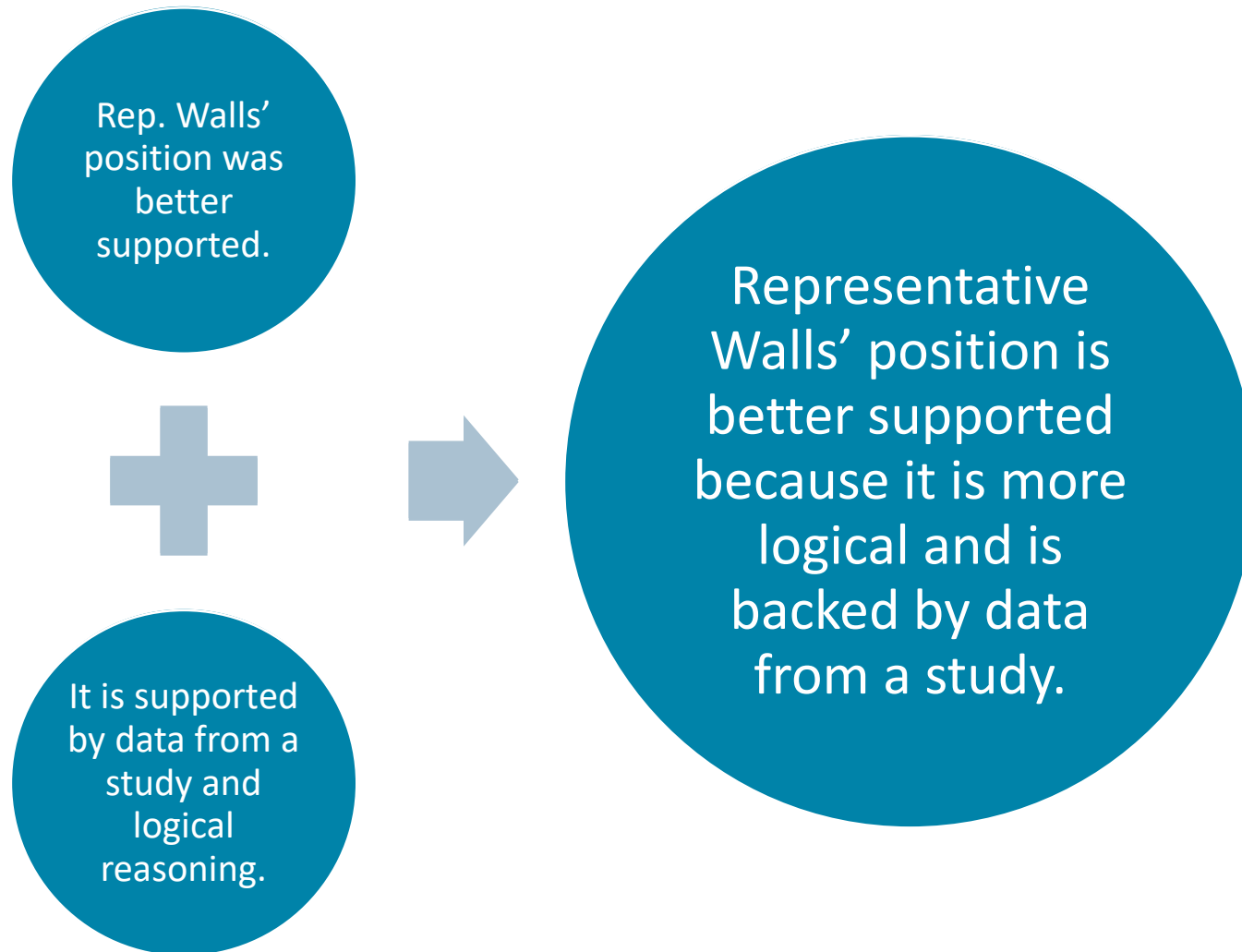
Data and Logical Reasoning

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

- Ease traffic congestion
- Create job
- Bring in more travelers
- Attract national motels and restaurants
- Create nice tourist attraction
- Study from Texas – 75% reduction in traffic and road maintenance
- Good investment



# Build the New Claim



# Rework the Introduction

## Current Intro

Need an opening

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

Representative Walls and Alice Jenkins have different views on expanding a nearby highway from two to four lanes. Both present good arguments about the impact on the town of expanding the nearby highway. Representative Walls' position is better supported because it is more logical and is backed by data from the study.

# Have a Process and Use It!



# 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**

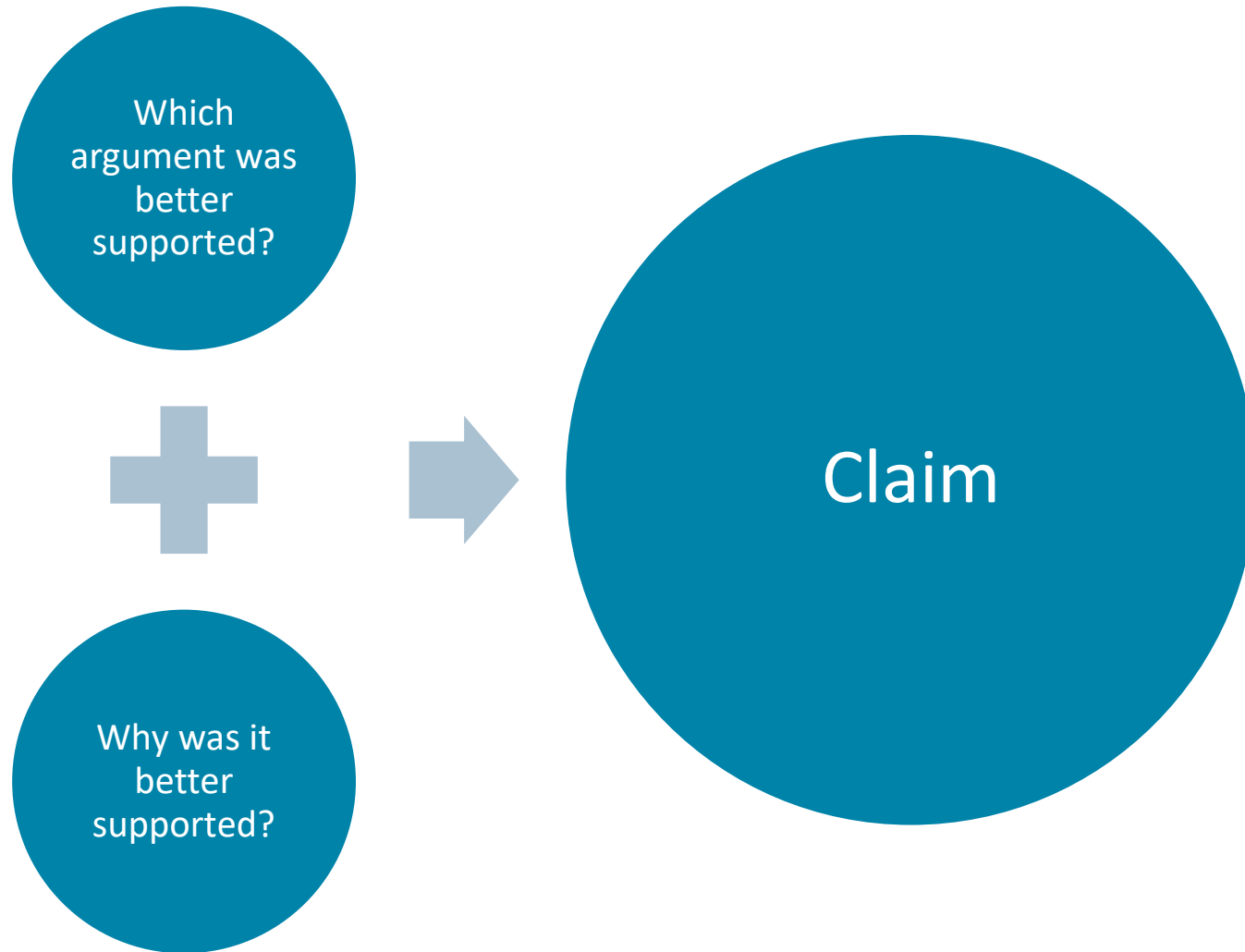
# Both Sides Now

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)

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

# Build the Claim





# 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

# 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)



“

*You can always edit a bad page.  
You can't edit a blank page.*

”

— Jodi Picoult

# Bringing It All Together!

- Start with the students' own work
- Use the GED Extended Response Electronic Scoring Tool to assess the response
- Review the report and map out a plan
- Start with the claim and a quick fix (something easy for the student to change, such as removing irrelevant information)
- Spend ample time working with the claim and the evidence that supports it
- Review the sentences and make revisions
- Check the organizational structure
- Address any grammatical errors

## Celebrate Success!

# Resources

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### Top Resources



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Instruction

[View Resource](#)


Free Classroom Materials

[View Resource](#)

# Free Classroom Materials

Get your classroom ready for action by downloading free materials such as tutorials, practice questions, and reference sheets to help students test with confidence.

## Tutorials

Students should practice with these tutorials so they learn about various question types and become familiar with how the test and calculator work. The tutorials work best on a computer (not a smartphone or tablet).

### Computer-Based Test Tutorial


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### Announcements

# Study Guides

The following study guides explain the skills that are covered in each GED® test subject and include sample questions. Use these with your students to help them prepare for each test subject.

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## Language Arts


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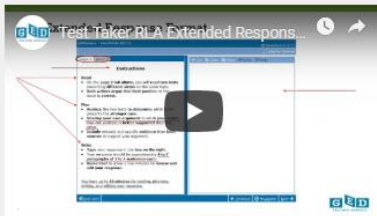
# Access Extended Response Video Series

[https://ged.com/about\\_test/test\\_subjects/language\\_arts/extended\\_response/](https://ged.com/about_test/test_subjects/language_arts/extended_response/)

## Language Arts Extended Response

Use these free videos, guidelines and examples to prepare and practice for the essay section of the Language Arts test.

Videos: How to write a great GED extended response



Video 1 of 8: Overview of the GED Extended Response (1:28)



Video 2 of 8: How to Determine Which Position is Best Supported (2:49)



Video 3 of 8: How to Write a Well-Supported Argument (4:21)



Video 4 of 8: How to Make a Plan and Write an Introduction (3:25)



Video 5 of 8: How to Write the Body and Conclusion (4:47)



Video 6 of 8: How to Write a Fully Supported Response (3:34)



Video 7 of 8: How to Check and Revise Your Response (2:58)



Video 8 of 8: Understand How Your Response is Scored (3:14)

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## What Students Need to Know: GED RLA's Extended Response



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# Q & A



# Thank you!

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Susan Pittman – [skptvs@aol.com](mailto:skptvs@aol.com)*