

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

- The webinar will start at 3:30 pm EDT/ 2:30 pm CDT.
- If you have a technical question before the webinar, please type it into the question panel. We will do our best to answer your question.
- When you log on, check your audio to make sure your headphones are working properly.
- If you use your phone to call in, be sure to enter the appropriate codes.
- As you enter the webinar, your audio will be muted to avoid a lot of background noise.
- You will not hear anything until 3:30 p.m. when the webinar goes live, so please don't think that anything is wrong.
- If you haven't downloaded the PowerPoint handout and guide, please feel free to do so from the handout panel.

1 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



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

Tuesdays for Teachers
December 12, 2017

Welcome!

- Daphne Atkinson, GED Testing Service
- Debi Faucette, GED Testing Service
- Bonnie Goonen, Consultant to GEDTS
- Susan Pittman, Consultant to GEDTS

3 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



Workshop Objectives



- Overview the performance expectations for CR items and scoring



- Explore teaching key aspects of constructed response
- Present a structured approach to tackling a writing task



- Share resources

GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



Key Skills

5

GEDtesting.com • GED.com



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** good test strategy



GEDtesting.com • GED.com

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 for instructors to work with”
- There isn't enough time for students to complete the task
- Skipping the ER is good test strategy

7 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



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 a “right” answer—they are just not admitting it

8 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



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

GEDtesting.com • GED.com



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 that becomes a “go-to”
- Enough practice

10 GEDtesting.com • GED.com



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.”

GEDtesting.com • GED.com



RLA ER Requires the Following Skills...

- “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

GEDtesting.com • GED.com



Sharing Findings

Test-Taker Performance: What We've Found

13 GEDtesting.com • GED.com



Why Are Students Struggling?

- Refusing to use an outline or plan from which to write
- Ignoring the value of a structured approach to the task
- Not writing enough to be scored
- Not fully utilizing the available time

14 GEDtesting.com • GED.com



What is the Skills' Gap?

Reasoning—both qualitative and quantitative

- **Analysis** of written material—including the role of details, main ideas, thematic support and relationships within written sources;
- Extraction of **evidence** (e.g. facts, statistics, examples, or expert testimony) from written material and the ability to draw logical inferences or develop valid claims;
- **“Connecting the dots”**: understanding relationships (between people, places, things like processes and events, etc.) and the analysis of cause-and-effect relationships, both simple and complex

15 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



From Struggling to Successful

	Struggling Writers	Successful Writers
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce fewer ideas • Fail to organize their thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop multiple ideas • Organize their ideas
Draft/write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit spelling, capitalization, and punctuation • Make more content revisions • Correct overall appearance

16 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com

The IRIS Center Vanderbilt Peabody College



A Few Insights to Improve Student Performance

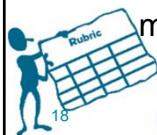
17

GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



What Earns Points

- Going beyond merely stating which side is best 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



18

GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



Setting the Claim (statement of stance)

This . . .

Between the two positions in this article, the one against Daylight Savings Time is better supported because of the stronger research used.

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.

19 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com

Instead of . . .

They say daylight savings time is a great thing.

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.



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

20 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



Analyze, (evaluate), and engage

This . . .

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.

Instead of . . .

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.

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)

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.

23 GEDtesting.com • GED.com



What is the expectation for an effective 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**

24 GEDtesting.com • GED.com



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, not just a short paragraph (300-500 words)
- 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—that is one of the things evaluated

25 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



“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

26 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



A Simple Structure for CR

The diagram illustrates the structure of a Constructed Response (CR) through three sequential sections, each represented by a blue downward-pointing arrow on the left and a corresponding text box on the right:

- 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.

GEDtestingervice.com • GED.com

Instructional Strategy

Teach Analyzing and Evaluating

28 GEDtestingervice.com • GED.com

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?

29 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



Evaluation (makes judgment and explains why)

- Analyzes the purpose of the argument
- Recognizes the main claim and judges how it is expressed
- Understands and evaluates the structure of the argument
- Evaluates the reliability of evidence
- Understands and evaluates reasoning about the evidence

30 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



Begin with the End in Mind



Response 1:

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 letter provides a stronger argument because it provides more factual evidence.

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 speckled 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.

GED Testing Service® | www.GEDTestingService.com • GED.com

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.



Response 1:

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 letter provides a stronger argument because it provides more factual evidence.

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 speckled 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.

32 GED Testing Service® | www.GEDTestingService.com





Claim
"While both sides make an acceptable case, the letter provides a better-supported argument."

Analysis/Evaluation
"press release and letter ...offer positions that are supported by both fact and opinion"

Evidence
"a resident...is more credible...as compared to a representative"
"factual information"
"backed by logical explanations and facts with few speculations"

Counterclaim "press release offers some facts", but "mainly specked with anticipation and hopes" rebutted by the author of the letter

Response 1:

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 letter provides a stronger argument because it provides more factual evidence.

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 shirk 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, though 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 speculations and hopes, given to overshadow any doubts and quell any criticism. The letter, penned by a resident of the town and owner of a business, subject to first-hand knowledge of the citizens of the district. The press release is pushed by an elected representative who has not visited the town a number of times and consulting a small percentage of the community. The author of the letter is more likely to be a resident of the town, and is more likely to be convinced she understands the majority. Although both parties may very well have the interests of the district in mind, and either position could be correct, it is clear that the letter provides a better-supported argument.

GED Testing Service® www.GEDTestingService.com

33 GEDTestingService.com • GED.com

What Drives Argumentative Writing: Evidence

34 GEDTestingService.com • GED.com



Research Basis

G. Hillocks (2010) points out that “many teachers begin to teach some version of argument with the writing of a thesis statement [but] in reality, good argument begins with looking at ***the data that are likely to become the evidence in an argument*** and that give rise to a thesis statement or major claim.”

Hillocks, G. (2010) *Teaching argument for critical thinking and writing: An introduction*. English Journal 99(6) 24-32

35 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com



Written Argument in the Classroom

The Question	
Your Claim	
Your Evidence	Your Reasoning
Counterclaims/Rebuttals:	
Summary of your argument:	

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



Both Sides Now

Both Sides Now		
Evidence that Supports		Evidence that Opposes
	Question or statement Which position is better supported?	
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)

37 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com

Helping Students Respond More Effectively

- Review the sample responses in RLA Resource Guides
- Closely examine the annotations
- Help students understand the prompt and what is being asked
- Use the rubrics and/or scoring tools to evaluate student work
- Provide ample practice in class using a variety of materials

38 GEDtestingservice.com • GED.com

Proficient Readers and Writers Can...

- Read complex text
- Identify text structure
- Look for key words and phrases
- Unpack the prompt
- Develop a claim or argument
- Find the evidence that supports that claim or argument
- Analyze and evaluate the evidence
- Explain how the evidence is connected to the claim or argument

GEDtesting.com • GED.com



Getting Started...First Steps...

Have students

- **Closely read** source texts and identify the evidence
- **Use the evidence** to determine the better supported argument
- **Provide a rationale** for why the argument was better supported



40 GEDtesting.com • GED.com

Access Online Reading Materials

The collage features four main educational websites:

- Annenberg Classroom:** Offers an "Introduction to Key Constitutional Concepts and Supreme Court Cases" and a "ProCon.org" section for promoting critical thinking.
- Newsela:** A digital resource library with a "SCIENCE" section featuring articles on alien life and crab-fishing.
- ProCon.org:** Focuses on "PROS AND CONS OF 32 CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES" with categories like Education, Politics, Religion, and Science & Technology.
- Digital Resource Library:** Provides "Tools for Teachers: Professional Development Modules" for CCSS, including sections on text complexity, reading dependent questions, and academic writing.

41 GEDtesting.service.com • GED.com

Access Previous Webinars and More

The collage highlights several GED resources:

- MyGED:** A platform for scheduling, transcripts, and more.
- Webinars:**
 - "Thinking Strategies for Crafting Constructed Responses: Part 1 Evaluating Evidence to Support a Claim" (Tuesdays for Teachers Webinar, May 24, 2016)
 - "Thinking Strategies for Crafting Constructed Responses: Part 2 - One Step at a Time" (Tuesdays for Teachers Webinar, June 28, 2016)
- Guides:** "The 2014 GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test Extended Response Resource Guide for Adult Educators: Taxation and Revenue".
- Diagram:** A visual showing the relationship between "Evidence" and "Your explanation" in a constructed response.

42 GEDtesting.service.com • GED.com



Thank you!

Contact Us:

Daphne Atkinson,
daphne.atkinson@gedtestingservice.com

Debi Faucette,
debi.faucette@gedtestingservice.com

communications@gedtestingservice.com