

Helping Students Overcome Challenges with Reasoning Through Language Arts, **Part 1: Reading Skills**

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Welcome



Amy Hathorn, GEDTS
Senior Content Specialist, RLA



Brooke Palmer, GEDTS
Senior Content Specialist, RLA



Today's Focus

- RLA Background Information
- Skills Gaps Introduction
- Overarching Reading Skills Gaps
- Sample Indicators & Passage/Items Walk-Through
- Strategies for Improving Performance
- Reading Skills & the Extended Response
- Q&A

Targets and Indicators

- GED® Assessment Guide for Educators
 - https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/assessment_guide_for_educators_all_subjects.pdf
 - RLA begins on page 73.
 - Targets and Indicators begin on page 78.
- Free Practice Test online
 - <https://ged.com/practice-test/en/rla/start.html>
- Free Study Guide online
 - https://ged.com/wp-content/uploads/GED_Study-Guide_RLA.pdf

Background Information: RLA

- RLA = Reasoning Through Language Arts
 - Reading
 - Language
 - Writing
- All RLA items are text-based:
 - Multiple choice
 - Drag-and-drop items
 - Extended response (ER)
 - Dropdown editing items
- Emphasis on critical thinking, argumentation, evidence, close analysis of details, authentic tasks, real-world skills

Background Information: Reading

- RLA = Reasoning Through Language Arts
 - Reading*
 - Language
 - Writing
- The Reading section of the RLA Test includes 1/3 literary texts and 2/3 informative texts.
 - Short fiction, memoirs, excerpts from novels, etc.
 - articles, blog posts, newspaper columns, emails and memos, speeches, etc.

What is a skills gap?

A gap is the difference between the ***expected*** performance and the ***actual*** performance.

- Gaps range from foundational skills to more complex skills.
- Guidance and practice on these skills could help students improve their overall performance.

How the gaps were identified



Develop Items & Passages



Write
Review/Edit
Committee Review
Review/Edit
Expert Review



Field Test & Analyze



Construct
Review
Embed/Test
Analyze data
Add to bank



Build/Publish Tests



Construct
Translate
Review
Publish
Research

Possible reasons for gaps

- Students may need to improve their **critical thinking**, writing, and/or **reading skills**.
- Students may have specific gaps that need more instruction during GED® test preparation.
- Students may tend to underperform on certain items simply because the concepts are difficult.

GED® Reading Skills



Reading Skills: Lessons from Data Review

- **Examples of discussion notes from Data Review meetings:**
 - "Y is correct but subtle. X is incorrect but attractive if you rely on prior knowledge rather than reading the passage."
 - "X is incorrect: Paragraph # does not mention KEY TERM in the option. Attention to details required - close reading."
 - "Correlation data is good, but difficult item. Close reading required."
 - "X is a fair incorrect response for a reading test. You have to read and not answer based on prior/outside opinions."
 - "Students need to read the whole context of the passage and paragraph."

Reading Skills Gaps: Lessons from Data Review

Data Trends: How do students perform on Reading skills?

	Overarching Reading Skills Gaps
Gap 1	Close Reading of the Text
Gap 2	Consider the WHOLE Context of the Text
Gap 3	Think about the Author (Integral to Passage Context)

Reading Overarching Skills Gap Explained

Gap 1 Close Reading of the Text

Key Ideas

- Read closely.
- Go back to the text to find details or components of an argument.
- Re-read the relevant sections.
- Do not just "match words" between the item and the text; instead, interpret the text.
 - Most reading items require more than basic recall

Common Mistakes

- Word matching: Picking an option because it uses a key word in the passage, without thinking through if it is a good answer
- Not seeing the building blocks of the author's argument
- Ignoring the details of the text

Reading Overarching Skills Gap Explained

Gap 2 Consider the WHOLE Context of the Text

Key Ideas

- All items relate to the text as a whole; an individual item will not contradict the meaning of the larger text.
- If a sentence is quoted in an item stem, consider the role of the sentence within the whole text. (It does not exist in isolation.)
- Incorrect options will seem plausible, but they will not fit the overall meaning of the WHOLE text (when evaluated closely).

Common Mistakes

- Choosing an answer that sounds true (plausible) but contradicts the views or overall message of THIS text

Reading Overarching Skills Gap Explained

Gap 3 Think about the Author (Integral to Passage Context)

Key Ideas

- What is the author's role, perspective, agenda, purpose?
- How does that role (etc.) influence what the author writes/says?
- What biases or assumptions might the author have or make? An item's correct response **CANNOT** contradict the perspective or agenda of the author.

Common Mistakes

- Choosing an answer that sounds true but contradicts the views or perspective of the author of THIS text (as presented in the text)
- Choosing an incorrect option that is an opinion, but it is not THIS author's opinion (or is not supported based on the author's claim and line of reasoning)

GED® Reading: Passage/Items Walk-Through



Reading Passage Walk Through

What is "close reading" of a text?

Strategy for Improving Performance

- Use highlighter tool to mark key "close reading" elements in the text.
Examples:
 - Main ideas
 - Details
 - Claims
 - Evidence
 - Counterarguments
 - Tone words
- Text highlights can:
 - Help students visualize the "building blocks" of the text
 - Help students locate answers to items more quickly
 - Make the passage less daunting

Focusing on Indicators

Code	Indicator
R.8.2	Students will identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions.
R.2.5	Students will determine which detail(s) support(s) a main idea.
R.8.1	Students will delineate the specific steps of an argument the author puts forward, including how the argument's claims build on one another.
R.2.8	Students will draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas in text.
R.9.3	Students will compare two argumentative passages on the same topic that present opposing claims [...] and <u>analyze how each text emphasizes different evidence or advances a different interpretation of facts.</u>

R.8.2: Improving Performance

R.8.2

Students will identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions.

What does this indicator measure?

- Understanding claims made by an author
- Recognizing how evidence supports a claim
- Recognizing claims that lack evidence
- Understanding conclusions an author draws from evidence

What has Data Review shown?

- "Option X is evidence in the passage, but it supports a different claim than the one asked about in the item."

The Gap

- **Students might not analyze the context around a claim to fully understand how the evidence supports it.**
- **Students might choose evidence that appears NEAR the claim within the passage, not realizing that the relevant evidence is in a different paragraph (such as above or below).**

R.8.2: Improving Performance

R.8.2

Students will identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions.

Strategies for Improving Performance

- Students need to evaluate if the detail is really evidence for the claim. Evidence is not always next to the claim.

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?

- Students who understand how an author uses evidence to support their claims can better evaluate the strength of the argument. This kind of reasoning explained in an ER essay will strengthen their own argument.

R.2.5: Improving Performance

R.2.5

Students will determine which detail(s) support(s) a main idea.

What does this indicator measure?

- Distinguishing between broad main ideas and supporting details
- Recognizing details that support a main idea
- Inferring a main idea that is not explicitly stated

What has Data Review shown?

- "Students choosing the detail in option Y are missing that it does not support the main idea. X is clearly the better answer--it directly and clearly supports the main idea."

The Gap

- **Students might choose a detail with information related to the main idea but that does not SUPPORT that main idea directly.**
- **Students might choose an answer without carefully reading all options.**

R.2.5: Improving Performance

R.2.5

Students will determine which detail(s) support(s) a main idea.

Strategies for Improving Performance

- Students need to evaluate if the detail *truly supports* the given main idea.
- Students need to weigh all of the options; one detail will be BEST.
- *Think* about the main ideas; they may not be explicit in the text.

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?

- The student's understanding of how each passage's main ideas are supported with relevant details will aid how they build and support their own main ideas in their essays.

R.8.1: Improving Performance

R.8.1

Students will delineate the specific steps of an argument the author puts forward, including how the argument's claims build on one another.

What does this indicator measure?

- Identifying claims made by an author
- Analyzing how multiple claims build on each other to create an argument
- Analyzing the logic of an argument ("If X is true, and Y is true, then XY must also be true.")

What has Data Review shown?

- "X is incorrect—no claim being supported, but the wording is broad, so students need to think it through."

The Gap

- **Students might not take time to reread the passage for details about how the claims are working together.**
- **Students might ignore how the AUTHOR uses the claims and make their own assumptions instead.**

R.8.1: Improving Performance

R.8.1

Students will delineate the specific steps of an argument the author puts forward, including how the argument's claims build on one another.

Strategies for Improving Performance

- Learn about strategies for building an argument: raising questions, defining a problem, refuting counterarguments, proposing solutions, etc.
- Understand the argument in the passage; notice the "building blocks" the writer is using to create the argument.

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?

- Students who understand how claims build on each other to support an argument can discuss whether the authors of the ER passages are using strong or weak arguments and then model a logical, well-built argument of their own in their essays.

R.2.8: Improving Performance

R.2.8

Students will draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas in text.

What does this indicator measure?

- Synthesizing (pulling together) *multiple* main ideas in a text
- Drawing conclusions that are *not explicit* in the text, based on the main ideas
- Making generalizations based on the main ideas in the text

What has Data Review shown?

- "Y is unsupported. Students choosing Y may be latching on to the key term in paragraph Z, but that is not close reading of the passage."
- "Subtle item, but choosing Y ignores XYZ details in the passage. Close reading required."

The Gap

- **Some students choose options that are contradicted by details and main ideas in the passage.**
- **Some students misinterpret main ideas in the passage.**
- **Some students overlook an idea that is implied but not spelled out.**

R.2.8: Improving Performance

R.2.8

Students will draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas in text.

Strategies for Improving Performance

- Pay attention to the main ideas of the passage to develop a sense of what the author of the passage thinks about the topic/issue. Then only consider conclusions or generalizations that fit this author's perspective or opinion.
 - Students should base their answer on THIS author.
- Eliminate possible conclusions or generalizations that are contradicted by ideas (including implications) and details in the text. (Close reading.)

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?

- The student's generalizations about each passage's main ideas can add to their written analysis
- Student analysis that synthesizes multiple main ideas from an ER passage will likely demonstrate a better understanding of the source text and thus help fuel a stronger response.

R.9.3: Improving Performance

R.9.3

Students will compare two argumentative passages on the same topic that present opposing claims [...] and **analyze how each text emphasizes different evidence or advances a different interpretation of facts.**

What does this indicator measure?

- Critical thinking – multilayered skills
- Analyzing how authors use evidence to serve their agenda
- Analyzing how two authors could use the same fact differently

What has Data Review shown?

- "Students who choose X are not reading the passage carefully: *that* author does not mean to imply XYZ (based on the rest of the argument)."
- "A reader should be able to pick up this detail."

The Gap

- **Students need to look closely at how each author is using the information differently to serve their overall purpose.**

R.9.3: Improving Performance

R.9.3

Students will compare two argumentative passages on the same topic that present opposing claims [...] and **analyze how each text emphasizes different evidence or advances a different interpretation of facts.**

Strategies for Improving Performance

- Students need to look closely at how *each* author is using the given fact. Understand the author's overall purpose, and how the fact is used in service of that purpose. Then compare how the two authors are using the fact differently, for different purposes.

How do skills in this indicator help with the Extended Response?

- If the pair has a fact that is used in both passages to serve different purposes: Students who analyze the divergent use of that same fact will be using evidence in their essays that demonstrates critical thinking and how to synthesize layered information and draw a conclusion.

Summary of Reading Strategies

Close Readers	Not-So-Close Readers
Reread the text (highlighter!)	Read the text only once
Focus on the text	Let their thinking wander
Ask questions to uncover deeper meaning	Interpret only at surface level
Pay attention to language	Ignore author strategies
Consider the WHOLE text	Interpret only a sentence or section; skim for matching words
Look at evidence and details in the text	Rely on prior knowledge or personal opinions

Reading Skills & the GED® Extended Response



How can close reading skills help with the GED® Extended Response?

The screenshot displays the GED Extended Response interface. On the left, a sidebar contains 'Instructions' for the task. The main area on the right is a text box for the response, with three yellow callout boxes providing additional guidance. The interface includes a top navigation bar with 'page 1' and 'page 2' tabs, and a bottom bar with a 'Navigator' icon and a 'Next' button.

Instructions

Read

- On the **page 2 tab above**, you will read two texts presenting **different views** on the same topic.
- **Both writers argue** that **their position** on the issue is **correct**.

Plan

- **Analyze** the two texts to **determine** which writer presents the **stronger case**.
- **Develop your own argument** in which **you explain** how one position is **better supported** than the other.
- **Include** relevant and specific **evidence** from **both sources** to support your argument.

Write

- **Type** your response in the **box on the right**.
- Your response should be approximately **4 to 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each**.
- **Remember** to allow a few minutes to **review and edit** your response.

You have up to **45 minutes** for reading, planning, writing, and editing your response.

Using reading skills to fully read and understand the ER passages will help in writing a better response.

The highlighter tool is available on ER passages.

Highlighting the authors' claims and evidence will help determine the strength of each author's argument.

Navigator Next → E D TESTING SERVICE®

The GED® Extended Response

Scored on three traits:

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

How can close reading skills help with the GED® Extended Response?

- The ER task asks students to develop an argument ABOUT two arguments, so students are BOTH reading/analyzing the arguments in the prompt passages *and* they are writing their own draft of an argument.
- As a student increases their reading skills overall, their *performance* (writing) on these skills should improve. Students who have even *some* ability with the Reading skills we've discussed could also earn a point for their writing – so it is worth it to write the essay!
- Students who improve their performance on Reading skills will be able to "close read" the ER passages, analyze which of the passages creates a better argument, and write a more analytical & well-developed response.

GED® Extended Response

- More about the GED Extended Response in Part 2

Helping Students Overcome Challenges
with Reasoning Through Language Arts,
Part 2: Language and Writing

Q & A

WHICH? help? why? what? who?

HOW about? answers

WHERE? why?

WHO? WHEN? WHY?

FAQ

Thank you!

*Communicate with GED Testing Service®
help@ged.com*

Amy Hathorn – amy.hathorn@ged.com

Brooke Palmer – brooke.palmer@pearson.com