



The 2014 GED[®] Reasoning Through Language Arts Test

Extended Response Resource Guide for Adult Educators: Taxation and Revenue

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The 2014 GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) Test Extended Response Resource Guide for Adult Educators Taxation and Revenue

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Overview and Introduction to Taxation and Revenue Resource Materials

This guide has been assembled by the GED Testing Service in order to help adult educators increase their understanding of and skill in scoring the Extended Response (ER) questions on the 2014 GED® test. Using these resources will help you identify the various qualities and attributes of ER responses at the full range of score points for each of the three traits on the rubric which, in turn, will help you to focus your writing instruction for adult learners who will be taking the 2014 GED® test. Using these materials will also help you in scoring responses that adult learners provide you as part of their preparation for the test in taking the GED Ready® practice test. The GED Ready® practice test is accompanied by a tool ([Educator Scoring Tool](#)) that can help you score test-taker responses. This guide, as a supplement to that tool, is intended to increase your facility with and accuracy in scoring ER items for the RLA test.

The materials in this guide involve a publicly-released ER item that was previously used on the operational GED® test, based on a passage called “Taxation and Revenue.” The responses in this guide are actual writing samples written by adult test-takers in response to the stimulus material and prompt on Taxation and Revenue. All of the characteristics of the responses, including spelling, paragraphing, and spacing, have been left exactly as originally written and submitted by the test-takers. They also appear here exactly as they appeared to the educator Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who determined the range of responses for each score point and to the expert human scorers who provided the final certified scores for the responses. The explanations (called “annotations”) as to why each student response received its score are presented to enhance your understanding and were also written by SMEs.

The following pages present the stimulus material and the prompt for the Taxation and Revenue Extended Response.

* Note: The ER scoring tool is meant to be used as a guide to scoring, but once you become more familiar with the dimensions and sub-dimensions, you will be able to score writing samples holistically, without fully following the tool. There is no expectation that you will use the tool for EVERY response that you score, and the materials in this guide should help you begin to gain the skills at evaluation of writing that you will need to effectively score extended responses first with the tool and later, without relying on it.

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 12th 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 12th 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.

RLA Extended Response Answer Guidelines

The guidelines below are presented to test-takers as a tool within the testing environment in order to remind them of the kinds of elements and attributes of argumentation, organization, language usage, etc., to be incorporated into their responses to the ER prompt.

Please use the guidelines below as you answer the Extended Response question on the Reasoning Through Language Arts test. Following these guidelines as closely as possible will ensure that you provide the best response.

1. **Please note that this task must be completed in no more than 45 minutes.** However, don't rush through your response. Be sure to read through the passage(s) and the prompt. Then think about the message you want to convey in your response. **Be sure to plan your response before you begin writing.** Draft your response and revise it as needed.
2. Fully answering an ER prompt often requires **4 to 7 paragraphs of 3 to 7 sentences each** – that can quickly add up to 300 to 500 words of writing! A response that is significantly shorter could put you in danger of scoring a 0 just for not showing enough of your writing skills.
3. As you read, think carefully about the **argumentation** presented in the passage(s). “Argumentation” refers to the assumptions, claims, support, reasoning, and credibility on which a position is based. Pay close attention to **how the author(s) use these strategies to convey his or her positions.**
4. When you write your essay, be sure to:
 - **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**
 - **put your main points in logical order** and tie your details to your main points
 - **organize your response carefully** and consider your **audience, message, and purpose**
 - **use transitional words and phrases** to connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas
 - **choose words carefully** to express your ideas clearly
 - **vary your sentence structure** to enhance the flow and clarity of your response
 - **reread and revise your response** to correct any errors in grammar, usage, or punctuation

RLA ER Rubric – Trait 1

The Reasoning Through Language Arts Extended Response Rubric for Trait 1 appears below:

Score	Description
Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence A	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">generates text-based argument(s) and establishes a purpose that is connected to the prompt Bcites relevant and specific evidence from source text(s) to support argument (may include few irrelevant pieces of evidence or unsupported claims) Canalyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts (e.g., distinguishes between supported and unsupported claims, makes reasonable inferences about underlying premises or assumptions, identifies fallacious reasoning, evaluates the credibility of sources, etc.) D
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">generates an argument and demonstrates some connection to the promptcites some evidence from source text(s) to support argument (may include a mix of relevant and irrelevant citations or a mix of textual and non-textual references)partially analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts; may be simplistic, limited, or inaccurate
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">may attempt to create an argument OR lacks purpose or connection to the prompt OR does neithercites minimal or no evidence from source text(s) (sections of text may be copied from source)minimally analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts; may completely lack analysis or demonstrate minimal or no understanding of the given argument(s)

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

- Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt
- Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic
- Response is incomprehensible
- Response is not in English
- Response has not been attempted (blank)

Note: *The annotations to the rubric, A through D, appear on the next page of this guide.*

- A**
- Trait 1: Responses are scored according to the criteria outlined in all three bullets.
 - Each bullet represents a distinct **dimension** or **quality of writing** that involves the creation of arguments and use of evidence. Each score point describes the same dimensions, but at varying levels of mastery.
 - Responses may exhibit qualities indicative of more than one score point. For instance, a response may contain a logical text-based argument and sufficient support (a 4-point response), but the integration of claims might be simplistic (a 2-point response).
 - When a response shows mixed evidence of proficiency levels, it will receive a score that reflects a balanced consideration of each quality, with no one dimension weighted more than the others.

- B**
- The first dimension relates to making claims or assertions.
 - At higher score points, arguments will be focused on close reading and analysis of the source texts. As responses ascend the scale in this dimension, they will become more focused on making arguments.

- C**
- The second dimension focuses on a test-taker's ability to use information from the source texts to support their claims or assertions.
 - As responses ascend the scale in this dimension, they will use evidence that is progressively more tied to the text.
 - At lower score points, the test-taker may rely more heavily on evidence drawn from personal experience with the topic rather than from text-based evidence.
 - While responses that argue the test-taker's own opinion on the issue are acceptable, test-takers who focus more specifically on the task outlined in the prompt, which asks them to analyze source texts to determine which position is better supported, will be more likely to score highly on this dimension.
 - More specifically, responses that establish criteria for the evaluation of the source texts and then apply these criteria to specific text-based evidence are most likely to score highest in this dimension.

- D**
- The third dimension focuses on a test-taker's ability to critically evaluate the rhetorical strategies and argumentation demonstrated by the authors of the source texts.
 - While responses that argue the test-taker's own opinion on the issue are acceptable, test-takers who focus more specifically on the task outlined in the prompt, which asks them to analyze source texts to determine which position is better supported, will be more likely to score highly on this dimension.

RLA ER Rubric – Trait 2

Trait 2 Anchor Responses and Annotations

Score	Description
Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure E	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- contains ideas that are well developed and generally logical; most ideas are elaborated upon F- contains a sensible progression of ideas with clear connections between details and main points G- establishes an organizational structure that conveys the message and purpose of the response; applies transitional devices appropriately H- establishes and maintains a formal style and appropriate tone that demonstrate awareness of the audience and purpose of the task J- chooses specific words to express ideas clearly K
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- contains ideas that are inconsistently developed and/or may reflect simplistic or vague reasoning; some ideas are elaborated upon- demonstrates some evidence of a progression of ideas, but details may be disjointed or lacking connection to main ideas- establishes an organization structure that may inconsistently group ideas or is partially effective at conveying the message of the task; uses transitional devices inconsistently- may inconsistently maintain a formal style and appropriate tone to demonstrate an awareness of the audience and purpose of the task- may occasionally misuse words and/or choose words that express ideas in vague terms
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- contains ideas that are insufficiently or illogically developed, with minimal or no elaboration on main ideas- contains an unclear or no progression of ideas; details may be absent or irrelevant to the main ideas- establishes an ineffective or no discernable organizational structure; does not apply transitional devices, or does so inappropriately- uses an informal style and/or inappropriate tone that demonstrates limited or no awareness of audience and purpose- may frequently misuse words, overuse slang or express ideas in a vague or repetitious manner

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

- Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt
- Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic
- Response is incomprehensible
- Response is not in English
- Response has not been attempted (blank)

Note: The annotations to the rubric, E through K (with no letter I [EYE] being used), appear on the next page of this guide.

- E**
- The five bullets, or dimensions, in Trait 2 must be considered together to determine the score of any individual response.
 - No one dimension is weighted more than any other.
 - Each score point describes the same dimensions, but at varying levels of mastery.
- F**
- The first dimension relates to the depth and breadth of explanation exhibited in the response. While support for ideas should come from the source texts (like in Trait 1), fully developed ideas are often extended with additional evidence that builds upon central assertions.
 - High-scoring papers will tend to contain multiple ideas that are fully elaborated upon and help articulate a central thesis.
 - Responses that develop ideas insufficiently, unevenly, or illogically fall into the lower score ranges with regard to this dimension.
- G**
- The second dimension focuses on how effectively the response builds from one idea to the next as well as the degree in which details and central ideas are linked.
 - High-scoring responses will maintain coherence and a sense of progression that help convey the writer's central thesis.
 - Responses at lower score points demonstrate an increasingly disjointed or unclear progression of ideas. Details are increasingly unrelated to central ideas, or even absent.
- H**
- The third dimension relates to how well the response is organized. Though paragraphs may lend structure to many responses, it is possible for a well-organized, logical, non-paragraphed response to receive a high score.
 - However, responses that contain circular, list-like, or scattered organizational structure, as well as those that do not fully integrate effective transitions between ideas, are often indicative of lower score points.
- J**
- The fourth dimension is associated with how well the response demonstrates an understanding of audience and purpose.
 - Responses that score highly in this dimension will establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of argumentative writing.
- K**
- The fifth dimension focuses on word choice. Effective word choice does not necessarily suggest that test-takers must employ a great deal of advanced vocabulary.
 - Advanced vocabulary used correctly is often associated with a higher score on Trait 2, but responses that reflect a precision in word choice are just as likely to score well in this dimension.
 - At lower score points, imprecise, vague and/or misused words are more prevalent.

RLA ER Rubric –Trait 3

Score	Description
Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions L	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: M <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs 2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism 3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures 4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity 5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments - demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: N <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions 2) subject-verb agreement 3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case 4) placement of modifiers and correct word order 5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences) 6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns 7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation) - may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing. P
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrates inconsistent sentence structure; may contain some repetitive, choppy, rambling, or awkward sentences that may detract from clarity; demonstrates inconsistent control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above - demonstrates inconsistent control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1 – 7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above - may contain frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that occasionally interfere with comprehension; standard usage is at a minimally acceptable level of appropriateness for on-demand draft writing.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure such that meaning may be obscured; demonstrates minimal control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above - demonstrates minimal control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1 – 7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above - contains severe and frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at an unacceptable level for on-demand draft writing. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - response is insufficient to demonstrate level of mastery over conventions and usage

*Because test-takers will be given only 45 minutes to complete Extended Response tasks, there is no expectation that a response should be completely free of conventions or usage errors to receive a score of 2.

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

- Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt
- Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic
- Response is incomprehensible
- Response is not in English
- Response has not been attempted (blank)

Note: The annotations to the rubric, L through P appear on the next page of this guide. (Note that the annotations do not use the letter O to avoid confusion with the number 0.)

- L**
- As in the previous two traits, each of the three dimensions of Trait 3 must be weighed together to determine the score.
 - Each score point describes the same dimensions, but at varying levels of mastery.
- M**
- This dimension relates to sentence structure and variety. Scoring will focus only on these skills essential to the development of sentence structure.
 - High-scoring responses mix simple and compound sentences and purposefully incorporate a variety of clauses to enhance overall fluidity.
 - Repetitive, choppy, rambling, and/or awkward sentence constructions are indicative of responses at the lower score points.
- N**
- The second dimension focuses on how well the response maintains specific conventions of standard English. Responses will be scored on the basis of a test-taker's demonstrated mastery over the particular language skills listed in this dimension. Though there are many other conventions that come into play in a test-taker's writing, these essential skills are the ones on which they will be scored.
 - Further, the longer the response, the greater tolerance for errors. For example, 10 errors in a 10-line response will likely receive a lower score than a response that contains 20 errors but is 60 lines long.
- P**
- The third dimension pertains to overall fluency with conventions and mechanics.
 - In order to receive a score higher than 1, test-takers must sustain their writing long enough to demonstrate their level of proficiency with all the skills listed in the two previous dimensions.
 - Then, writing samples are evaluated for level of grammatical and syntactical fluency appropriate for on-demand, draft writing.

Trait 1 Guidelines for Score Point 0

Trait 1 of the RLA Extended Response Rubric focuses on whether the test-taker can compose an effective argument and use text-based evidence to support his or her argument. Because this complex set of skills is new to the GED® test, the following guidance is provided to help educators understand more clearly what a score point of 0 on Trait 1 means, based on the rubric. Responses receiving a score of 0 are not blank, off-topic, or otherwise unscorable (when test-takers submit responses that fall into one of the categories listed below the rubric trait above, their score reports will reflect the category into which their response fell). Rather, the score point of 0 reflects that though the test-taker has attempted a response (i.e., the response shows evidence that the test-takers has, indeed, read either the passage or its accompanying prompt or both), the response does not provide adequate observable evidence of the skills described in the rubric. General guidelines to help you learn when to assign the score point of 0 on Trait 1 are provided below.

Overall, responses that score 0s show a great deal of variety. Remember:

- As you can see from the stimulus material on Taxation and Revenue presented above, the passage presents two opposing sides of an issue. In order to score higher than 0, the response must go beyond merely stating which side the test-taker agrees with. That is, to fulfill the rubric requirement of creating an argument, a single statement of a stance is considered insufficient.
- Similarly, in order to score higher than a 0, the response must do more than merely pulling quotations directly from the stimulus material. That is, to fulfill the rubric requirement of citing evidence, the evidence cited must support the overall message the test-taker is attempting to convey, and must be analyzed in some way.
- Responses at all score points may (or may not) explicitly state an opinion. However, in order to score higher than a 0, responses must analyze the issue at hand *or* the quality of the argumentation through which both sides of the issue are presented.
- Some responses may be composed primarily of a simple summary of the passage. Summaries alone, with no commentary upon the text, are insufficient to receive a score higher than 0.
- While scoring, try to avoid skimming for key words or excerpts from the passage. How well the test-taker uses excerpts from the passage to support his or her overall argument is just as important as whether the response includes specific citations from the written source at all. Sometimes it is tempting to reward a response that includes information or interesting anecdotes from the test-taker's own experience. However, this task requires test-takers to engage with the text provided and to demonstrate their level of skill with creating a text-based argument. Therefore, while references to personal experience do not "count against" the test-taker, they must be considered "white noise" and should generally be ignored.

Sample Taxation and Revenue Extended Responses with Annotations

Response 1:

The best candidate for the jon would be to fix the highways with the four lane it would possibly affect some change in town for Oak Falls. The bill might ease traffic congestion and create job opportunities. As of last yar the unemployment has no fast results for a new business in this case the district were worried about these peoples jobs.

And with the highway built it can increase attractions from national motel and restaurant chains. That means more permanent jobs and reduce traffic by a good 75%.

A local business owner has disagreed with the development of highway 17 being built. Because it might harm the town. Federal taxes will be paid by the local people around the area and will lose money as a result of this highway bypass paid for by tax dollars.

Alice stated , “Once the road construction is finished , only minimum wage jobs will remain.” Okay, so we all know it will passed by four cities in district alone. That means the local business stores will lose customers and won’t purchase anything along with these highways involved.

If this was to happen the state tax dollars would be plummet from angered voters. They lacked the consideration of letting people know about this future project. Which remains under concerned to this day.

Annotation for Response 1, Trait 1: Score Point 0

- This response is primarily a summary of the source text that demonstrates little to no understanding of the given arguments.
- The writer includes sections of the text copied from the source.
- This response lacks purpose and connection to the prompt, and fails to cite evidence in support of an argument, thereby earning a score of 0 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 1, Trait 2: Score Point 0

- The response consists of four brief paragraphs that primarily reiterate points from the two passages.
- The writer attempts to stake out a position in the first sentence, but does so in a way that is unclear (*The best candidate for the jon would be to fix the highways with the four lane it would possibly affect some change in town for Oak Falls*), and fails to develop this position coherently.
- There is no discernable organizational structure, and no transitions between one idea or paragraph and the next.
- There is little to no elaboration of ideas.
- The tone of the response is occasionally inappropriate for formal writing (*Okay, so we all know it will passed by four cities in district alone*).
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 1, Trait 3: Score Point 0

- The response demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure and problems with mechanics and conventions that interfere with the writer’s meaning.
- There are multiple instances of run-on sentences (*As of last yar the unemployment has no fast results for a new business in this case the district were worried about these peoples jobs*).
- In addition, there are errors in subject-verb agreement and in the use of apostrophes with possessives (the preceding excerpt contains examples of both), and there are several sentence fragments (*Which remains under concerned to this day*).
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 3.

Response 2:

The Press Release from the office of U.S. Representative Melody Walls has many could intentions, they want to make Highway 17 a four-lane highway instead of the two-lane highway it is now. Ms. Walls believes it will ease traffic congestion and create new job opportunities during and after construction. She also believes the highway will bring in more traffic due to the new four-lane highway and a increase in travelers from around the state, this will attract more hotels and restaurants which will give people permanent jobs. Another point she brought up was how the highway will help eighteen-wheeler traffic in the towns, it will cut down the noise and the amount of traffic. This new highway will also save the town money in the long run because they won't have to be spending money on repairing roads and they can use the saved money on other expenses the town needs. In all of this new proposed idea I think it would be best for the town to allow the new highway to be built for the people and the economy of the towns near the highway. If they were to build this, they would bring in way more jobs than they already have. It would greatly improve the economy, it would give the people a chance to find a job close to home and give them a steady income, they would not have to worry about losing their jobs because there would be so much traffic going by that the new business would always be busy with truckers,commuters and tourists and this means more money for the business and the workers.

The letter to the editor had a lot of issues with this new four-lane highway. The person that wrote this letter stressed that the new highway would totally bypass there town and they would lose business because of this. The letter also stressed that yes the highway will bring in new jobs but the high paying jobs will be temporary and the minimum wage jobs will be permanent, which concludes that there towns economy will take a big hit over the years. Lastly, the letter stressed that the tax payers would be paying for this highway and it won't even benefit them as much as the other towns and cities around the area. In all, both of these have pros and cons, but they should do whats best for the group and that would be to pay for the highway to be built. It would bring in more jobs for the people in the surrounding areas and the towns that won't really benefit might just have to think about changing jobs so they can be employed for years to come.

Annotation for Response 2, Trait 1: Score Point 0

- This response includes summaries of the source texts with commentary on the topic that serves as a minimal level of analysis.
- The writer attempts to build an argument in favor of building the highway: *“they should do whats best for the group...to pay for the highway to be built.”* The writer includes information from the text, but this is summary and not evidence to support the argument.
- Although the writer takes a stand on the issue at hand, it is not based on the strength of the arguments for the two positions.
- The last sentences of the response contain minimal amounts of analysis of the letter to the editor.
- Overall, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 2, Trait 2: Score Point 1

- The writer has attempted to organize his/her ideas by dividing the response into two paragraphs, each of which begins with a summary of one of the two positions followed by a brief and simplistic response to that summary.
- The first paragraph lays out the position taken by Rep. Walls, followed by the writer's opinion: *"I think it would be best for the town to allow the new highway to be built for the people and the economy of the towns near the highway."*
- The second paragraph describes the letter-writer's position, followed by a reiteration of the writer's opinion of the issue (*In all, both of these have pros and cons, but they should do what's best for the group and that would be to pay for the highway to be built*).
- The response lacks details and contains few transitional devices that would support a logical progression of ideas.
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 1 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 2, Trait 3: Score Point 0

- The response contains multiple examples of run-on and awkward sentences, homonym confusion (there/their), errors in subject-verb agreement, and incorrect use of apostrophes, detracting from the clarity of the writer's message and interfering with comprehension. For example: *"The Press Release from the office of U.S. Representative Melody Walls has many could intentions, they want to make Highway 17 a four-lane highway."*
- Overall, standard usage is at an unacceptable level for on-demand draft writing.
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 3.

Response 3:

The first argument from Melody Walls states that they want to expand Highway 17 from two-lane highway to a four-lane highway. It will move two miles east of the town of Oak Falls. The bill is supposed to ease the traffic congestion and create jobs for during and after construction. Melody Walls feel once the highway is completed it will bring in more long distance travelers into the area. With that being said it will attract national motels and restaurant chains along the highway route. This will mean permanent jobs for the residents. Melody Walls feel like as far as Oak Falls and Gaston, since they have that old "feel" to it because it was built by early settlers it would be a nice tourist attraction which will bring in more business for local shops and restaurants. The improved highway will eliminate the traffic of the eighteen wheelers through towns which is a major source of noise and traffic congestion. A study in Texas showed that the highway reduced traffic through towns by as much as 75% stopping them from having traffic and will reduce road maintenance. Melody Walls feel it will be a good investment to the area.

Alice Jenkins feels different because she, first off, is a native of Oak Falls. Alice Jenkins is a small town business owner living in the district. Seeing how Melody Walls plans on moving it two miles east that means it will now bypass their town completely and she does not agree with that at all. Alice Jenkins feels since the new highway runs through six states the construction will be paid with federal road funds that means that the city will have to pay for some of that which she thinks will hurt the town especially if there is no business coming in. Alice Jenkins feels that after the construction is finished that there will be minimum wage jobs remaining, towns will lose business because fewer travelers will pass by rather than come through. Alice Jenkins feels that travelers will not want to come back an extra two miles just to see what their town has to offer meaning no one but the town will shop in the town. No one will get hotel rooms or even gas mainly because everything is going to be on the exit route. Alice Jenkins agrees that it will be less noise but definitely bad for business.

I feel that Representative Walls' position was better supported because she had a lot of good points. It's always good to expand a freeway because of the reasons of a faster commute and less traffic. Anytime that they expand or build something that is going to cause a commotion. There is always a little town somewhere in the world and you can't make everyone happy. It will bring in more jobs and decrease the noise and on top of that it might be a little safer without the eighteen wheelers going through the back roads keeping children a little safer. I feel maybe they can agree to disagree and maybe take time out to make some type of brochure showing what Oak Falls has to offer. Meaning everyone wins, business flows, quieter, no more trucks and noise and people get to work quicker or where ever they have to go. Representative Walls has my support.

Annotation for Response 3, Trait 1: Score Point 0

- The writer attempts to build an argument in favor of building the highway (*Representative Walls has my support*). The majority of the response is solely a summary of the source texts that includes sections copied from the texts.
- The writer does include some commentary that minimally analyzes the source text. However, these comments are unsupported, minimal and vague (*...because she had a lot of good points*).
- Overall, the response is an insufficient attempt to build an argument and use evidence to support it.
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 3, Trait 2: Score Point 1

- The response shows a simplistic organizational structure with some evidence of a progression of ideas, albeit incomplete.
- The writer begins with a paragraph summarizing the arguments in Rep. Walls' press release in favor of the highway expansion, and then presents a second paragraph summarizing the arguments of the letter-writer against the project.
- The final paragraph presents the test-taker's response to the two positions (*I feel that Representative Walls position was better supported because she had a lot of good points*).
- The first sentence of the second paragraph (*Alice Jenkins feels different because she, first off, is a native of Oak Falls*), by presenting a contrast with the first paragraph, demonstrates the only use of a transitional device in the response.
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 1 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 3, Trait 3: Score Point 0

- While there is an attempt by the writer to vary the sentence structure, the response contains many run-on sentences, errors in comma usage (*The bill is suppose to ease the traffic congestion and create jobs for during and after construction*), unclear pronoun-antecedent references, examples of homonym confusion (*there/their*), and incorrect use of apostrophes (*it's/its*), all of which interfere with comprehension (*No one will get hotel rooms are not even gas mainly because everything is going to be on the exit route*).
- Overall, the standard usage in the response is at an unacceptable level for on-demand draft writing.
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 0 for Trait 3.

Response 4:

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.

Walls held town meetings to discuss whether to expand a highway through her district and possibilities that this expansion would help the unemployment caused by 2 businesses closing down. Walls argues that the highway means jobs for construction and restaurants and motels and gas stations will pop up to make permanent jobs after the construction is complete. Does using tax payer dollars to build and expand a highway make up for 2 businesses being lost and jobs going with them?

As Jenkins points out, only minimum wage jobs will be available from the business that Walls describes will come to town. She argues these minimum wage jobs will not be enough to replace the jobs that left with the camera place and the auto place.

Too many times politicians think that minimum wage jobs are good jobs, which they are not. No one can live on minimum wage. Most would rather live on unemployment or move to another city with good jobs. The representative quotes a 2001 study that says that a bypass reduces traffic flow and congestion in towns by 75% which Jenkins agrees with but in the same study it says the bypass has a negative impact on local businesses.

Jenkins points out that if State money were used in the construction, the voters would have voted it down but since the federal government is involved, she feels the tax money could be used wiser.

Jenkins correctly points out that this highway project is just a band aid on the scar left by the 2 businesses closing their doors.

Although the Walls is trying to bring some jobs to the community, it seems it is just a temporary fix and should concentrate on a better, more permanent solution.

Annotation for Response 4, Trait 1: Score Point 1

- The writer generates an argument in favor of Jenkins' position with simplistic reasoning: "*Jenkins has the better argument supported by common sense and enough data.*"
- The writer supports this argument by summarizing portions of the text while including a partial analysis of the two positions.
- To build the argument against the expansion, the writer uses reasoning that is unsupported, inaccurate and/or just opinions (*No one can live on minimum wage. Most would rather live on unemployment or move to another city with good jobs.*)
- The response receives a score of 1 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 4, Trait 2: Score Point 1

- The response demonstrates a simplistic organizational structure that is partially successful at conveying the writer's message.
- Divided into very brief paragraphs — sometimes consisting of only one sentence — the response begins with an introduction to the two opposing viewpoints, followed by a statement of the writer's argument (*I feel Jenkins has the better argument supported by common sense...*).
- The writer then briefly elaborates on the points made in the two passages and responds to these with opinion rather than developing his/her argument.
- There is only one attempt at a transitional device: Paragraph 3 ends with a question, and paragraph 4 begins with a response to that question. Otherwise, ideas do not build well off of each other.
- As a whole, the response is simplistically organized and inconsistently developed.
- Therefore, Response 4 earns a score of 1 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 4, Trait 3: Score Point 1

- Despite the brevity of the paragraphs in the response, there is some variety in sentence structure, and for the most part the writer is able to convey his/her points. There are several errors in comma usage, but these do not interfere significantly with comprehension.
- However, the writer's use of paragraphs of one sentence (5 out of 8) means that there are few opportunities to use transitional words, including conjunctive adverbs, that would enhance clarity and convey the writer's mastery of these skills.
- Therefore, Response 4 earns a score of 1 for Trait 3.

Response 5:

I believe that the Highway 17 should be expanded from a two lane highway to a fourlane highway due to the better support it has. There are many benefits of extending the highway and although it may seem negative at times, we need to look at the broader picture as well as some specifics. Overall, expanding the Highway will create new jobs in communities, therefore helping economically, and also will help decrease traffic congestion.

With an increase in unemployment in the 12th district after two major factories closed down, there is little hopes for new businesses to arise as well as for the unemployed to receive jobs. With a need to improve highways, jobs will be created as construction workers. This will therefore help the community get back on its feet and to help the community's economy. Some of the road construction jobs which are created while creating the road may be temporary, however there is room for permanent positions. Roads always will need upkeep and tiding up, which is why some will need to stick around to do the job after the creation of the road.

With roads being completed, this will allow more tourists to come visit the area. It will now be easier for people to travel from far distances and there will be an increase of travelers. This will bring money to the area tremendously, benefiting restaurants and motels as well as the old wheat mill for tourism. This will then allow people who work at those places to spend their money they are making within their community to help everyone living in it. These businesses also will be doing well, perhaps expanding and hiring more workers. This will mean permanent jobs for residents.

Eighteen-wheeler traffic in towns will be eliminated through towns. Noise will become a minimal issue as well as traffic congestion. It will also reduce road maintenance costs, which will help the city economically.

Although the expansion of Highway 17, federal taxes will be used to pay for the road. This will not have a direct effect on solely one community. Money will be used, given by the government which would come from everyone living in the United States.

Although the new highway will bypass four cities in the district, there is still a lot of room for advertisement. Travelers will be able to easily get to the four cities by the highway and come from longer distances. Although there is no guarantee tourists won't stop in the city, with advertising and networking with national motels and restaurants, they may be able to suggest ones in the four cities.

Overall there seems to be stronger evidence that building the new highway will help communities and decrease traffic congestion.

Annotation for Response 5, Trait 1: Score Point 1

- The response includes an argument for the expansion of the highway (*Overall, expanding the highway will create new jobs...helping economically, and also will help decrease traffic congestion*).
- The writer supports these two reasons (*help communities and decrease traffic congestion*) by referencing portions from the source text that discuss those topics and then analyzing the argumentation. To support the reason for the expansion, the writer proposes solutions to the problems from the opposing view (*Although the new highway will bypass four cities, there is still room for advertisement*).
- The writer needs more specific evidence from the text and more analysis.
- Overall, this response is simplistic and limited and therefore earns a score of 1 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 5, Trait 2: Score Point 1

- The response begins with a statement of the writer’s argument (*I believe that the Highway 17 should be expanded...due to the better support it has*), but without specific reference to either of the passages. In fact, the writer does not mention either Rep. Walls or Alice Jenkins in the response.
- Following the introduction, the response is organized into paragraphs, each of which addresses an aspect of the topic under consideration.
- Within the paragraphs, there is some elaboration of ideas and some use of transitional devices (*This will then allow...*).
- However, overall the structure does not present the opposing positions clearly or specifically, making the response only partially effective at conveying the writer’s message.
- Therefore, Response 5 earns a score of 1 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 5, Trait 3: Score Point 1

- The response contains multiple instances of run-on sentences (*Some of the road construction jobs which are created while creating the road may be temporary, however there is room for premenant positions*), comma errors, sentence fragments, confusing pronoun-antecedent references, and problems with parallelism that occasionally interfere with the writer’s meaning.
- The writer has used some variety in sentence structure, but there are awkward sentences that are difficult to understand (*Although there is no guarentee tourists won’t stop in the city, with adertising and networking with national motels and restaurants, they may be able to suggest ones in the four cities*).
- Standard usage is at a minimally acceptable level of appropriateness for on-demand draft writing.
- Therefore, Response 5 earns a score of 1 for Trait 3.

Response 6:

Representative Walls claims that the expansion of Highway 17 “will positively affect the town of Oak Falls.” This is a subjective claim according to the author of the letter. The ways in which the town will benefit, provided by the representative, are decreased traffic through town, the creation of job opportunities, new business springing up along the highway, and increased tourism. The press release goes on to state that the representative understands the concern of her citizens, because she had a town hall meeting with them the prior year. This is misleading because it almost implies support for the expansion by these citizens, when this is not the case. From the information provided, they simply expressed economic concerns about jobs, and this solution was neither offered nor discussed.

In the case of the letter to the editor, one citizen’s opinion is very clearly given. She states, that because of passage of this expansion, she will economically suffer. She is a small-business owner that relies on the congestion of traffic to come through town as customers in her shop. She proposes that, by diverting traffic around the cities, local businesses will lose customers. She even goes on to cite the very same 2001 Texas study used by the representative in favor of the road expansion. The representative chooses only to include the statistics supporting her case, a 75% reduction in traffic through towns. Mrs. Jenkins includes the part in the study about bypasses having a negative impact on local business. A statistic vital to the arguing of this case.

The representative’s claim about the bypass creating jobs is questionable, according to the letter. Sure, construction jobs will be created, but they are not permanent thus do not offer a long term solution to the problem. The representative also states that the proposed increase in highway traffic will encourage national chains to build more businesses along the highway, adding more jobs in the process. This might be true, but at what expense? With reduced traffic through town, already established local businesses will suffer. This will lead to the potential laying off of current employees. Therefore, the representative’s claim that jobs will be created is, in a sense, incorrect. Jobs will simply be redistributed from the town centers to the highways. Mrs. Jenkins also states that the quality of jobs are not satisfactory, because they will mostly be minimum wage positions.

The representative adds that the town’s historical features will likely attract tourists and traffic through the town. Mrs. Jenkins calls this in to question. She contends that there is no guarantee that such an increase will occur. She goes further to assert her belief that tourists will not venture two miles into town to view such attractions. A possible increase is not enough of a reason to intentionally divert the needed traffic away.

Annotation for Response 6, Trait 1: Score Point 1

- The writer generates an argument against the expansion (*A possible increase [in traffic] is not enough of a reason to intentionally divert the needed traffic away*). The writer uses this and other reasons to show Walls’ argument as “*misleading [and] incorrect*.”
- Although there are only some citations from the evidence used as support, the writer references the text to highlight strengths in Jenkins’ argument (*A statistic vital important to the arguing of this case*).
- The writer evaluates the argumentation by asking questions to point out flaws in Walls’ argument (*This might be true, but at what expense?*). The writer distinguishes between claims by showing which claims are unsupported or incorrect (*Therefore, the representative’s claim that jobs will be created is, in a sense, inaccurate*).
- Although limited, this response includes an argument with some evidence and partial evaluation, which merits a score of 1 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 6, Trait 2: Score Point 2

- The writer has employed a point-counterpoint format throughout the response, in each paragraph pitting the claims of Rep. Walls against the arguments of Alice Jenkins.
- For the most part, this organizational structure is effective at conveying the writer's views, which seem to support the arguments of Alice Jenkins.
- The response is lacking a clear statement of the writer's position, however, which occasionally compels the reader to infer the writer's meaning.
- The main transitional device employed by the writer is to offer responses to Rep. Walls' claims (*Sure, construction jobs will be created, but...*).
- On the whole, however, the writer's ideas are logical and specific points are elaborated upon.
- Therefore, Response 6 earns a score of 2 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 6, Trait 3: Score Point 1

- Although the writer varies sentence structure within the response, there are multiple examples of awkward or unclear sentences, sentence fragments (*A statistic vitally important to the arguing of this case*), errors in subject-verb agreement (*the quality of jobs are not satisfactory*), and errors in the use of apostrophes (*assert her belief that tourist's will not venture*) that occasionally interfere with comprehension.
- Overall, the response demonstrates standard English usage that is at a minimally acceptable level of appropriateness for on-demand task writing.
- Therefore, Response 6 earns a score of 1 for Trait 3.

Response 7:

Representative Melody Walls' announcement was more strongly supported than the letter to the Oak Falls Gazette Editor by Alice Jenkins. The letter to the newspaper editor was a strong letter, however, it was pumped full of opinions and very few facts. The announcement by Representative Walls had a vast assortment of facts ranging from job opportunities and noise in the town to traffic congestion.

Representative Melody Walls begins her announcement regarding the highway by pointing out a crucial fact: Turnaround Motors and Bell Camera closed their factory doors. Melody then further explains the devastating effect this had on the town of Oak Falls; high unemployment and no immediate prospects for new businesses. By introducing this fact to the audience first, Melody is then able to turn it back around to the highway and transit bill that was passed and show the positive effects it will have on this suffering town.

The most obvious positive effect this new transit bill will have would be that it will provide immediate jobs to construction workers while Highway 17 is being expanded. Not only does Representative Walls point out the unemployment decrease while the highway is being worked on, but also brings up the fact that if there is an increase in traffic on the highway, it will most likely result in an increase of foreign travelers which means more business for the town.

The highway expansion also will produce more jobs, not only for the construction workers while it is being worked on, but also for the rest of the townsfolk in Oak Falls. Melody states that the increase in travelers will attract national motel and restaurant chains and who would they hire to run those businesses? The residents of Oak Falls, producing even more job opportunities.

Conclusively, Melody Walls expresses that with an improved highway eliminating 18-wheeler traffic through the town, there will be much less traffic congestion as well a noise. As if that isn't enough, less 18-wheeler traffic also means there will be less road maintenance for the town.

Representative Melody Walls' announcement was crammed with positive facts regarding how this highway and transit bill will benefit their town of Oak Falls; While the letter from Alice Jenkins is full of nothing but opinions.

The letter written by Alice Jenkins was, as I said earlier, a strong letter. However, the only paragraph that contains hard hitting facts is the first one that states the bill was passed to expand Highway 17 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane highway. The rest of her letter is, basically, Alice expressing her grievance regarding this new bill that was passed. Several different excerpts can be listed from Alice Jenkins' letter to show the overwhelming opinions given: "I find this unacceptable", "I also believe that few residents of Oak Falls will use the road", "[federal] taxes will pay for a road that I believe will harm our town", "Our town and district will lose money", etc. etc. These are just a few examples of the opinions expressed in Alice Jenkins letter.

Consequently, the announcement by Representative Melody Walls was more creditable, trustworthy and reputable due to the facts that were presented within the speech.

Annotation for Response 7, Trait 1: Score Point 2

- The writer builds a text-based argument by evaluating the argumentation of each author’s message. The writer argues that Walls’ press release is the stronger argument because it includes a “*vast assortment of facts [and] was more credible, trustworthy and reputable due to the facts.*” In contrast, the writer argues that the letter to the newspaper editor “*was pumped full of opinions and very few facts.*”
- The response includes specific details from the text.
- The writer evaluates the details to show the strength in the argumentation and distinguishes claims (*...Melody is then able to turn it back around...and show the positive effects it will have on this suffering town*).
- The writer makes inferences based on the argumentation (*...it will most likely result in an increase...which means more business for the town*).
- In addition to demonstrating the strengths of Walls’ arguments, the writer includes relevant evidence to show the weaknesses in Jenkins’ argument (*Several different excerpts can be listed...to show overwhelming opinions given*).
- Overall, the writer maintains a purpose connected to the prompt and a text-based argument by citing relevant evidence and evaluating the validity of the two authors’ arguments.
- The response earns a score of 2 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 7, Trait 2: Score Point 2

- The response contains well-developed ideas, most of which the writer has elaborated upon. The opening paragraph states the writer’s position, followed by the line of argument he/she intends to use in the rest of the response, contrasting the “*vast assortment of facts*” used by Rep. Walls with the “*opinions*” offered by Alice Jenkins.
- The next four paragraphs address specific points made by Rep. Walls, demonstrating a logical progression from one to the next. The writer then makes a transition between Rep. Walls’ press release’s being “*crammed with positive facts*” to Alice Jenkins’ letter, which is “*full of nothing but opinions.*”
- Using specific examples from Jenkins’ letter, the writer then supports this viewpoint, ending the response with a concluding summary statement.
- Although there is some informality in tone (the writer repeatedly refers to Rep. Walls by her first name), overall, the organization of the response clearly conveys its message and purpose.
- Therefore, Response 7 earns a score of 2 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 7, Trait 3: Score Point 2

- Despite occasional errors in punctuation, primarily with comma use, the writer demonstrates a clear command of the conventions of standard English. The errors do not interfere with comprehension (*The letter to the newspaper editor was a strong letter, however, it was pumped full of opinions and very few facts*).
- The response contains a variety of sentence types and avoids wordy or awkward sentences.
- There are no apparent problems with subject-verb agreement, pronoun use, or capitalization.
- Standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing.
- Therefore, Response 7 earns a score of 2 for Trait 3.

Response 8:

I have just read two different accounts of a highway bypass and expansion. One side argues that this expansion will create jobs, reduce maintenance costs for the local roads, reduce traffic noise in town, reduce traffic in town by 75% and attract national hotel and business chains to create permanent jobs. The other side argues that taxpayer money is paying for it, that moving the highway 2 miles outside of town will deter people from going into town to shop at the local businesses and it would make them suffer. They also stated that the local concerns were not addressed, and that the highway would bypass four cities in its district.

The first account was from U.S. Representative, Melody Walls. In her press release, she outlined many ways that the expansion of the highway would be good for the town. She expressed that in building the expansion, it would create construction jobs for the local people. While these jobs are temporary, after the project is complete, it would attract national hotels and businesses to pop up along the way, creating permanent jobs for the locals.

Walls also expressed that with the new bypass, it would ease traffic congestion and noise throughout the town. She also stated, "A 2001 study in Texas showed that bypasses reduce traffic through towns as much as 75%. Eliminating eighteen-wheeler traffic will also reduce road maintenance costs." This is very true. Semi-trucks and their cargo weigh a lot, and tend to ruin normal roads. Walls spoke about brick streets that were built by settlers in Oak Falls, and Gaston which would attract tourists. If the big trucks and all that traffic were traveling on those roads for a long time, then it would ruin the historical value of those brick streets that were built by the settlers.

Walls provided studies and numbers to support her position. She stated that she held meetings in the towns for the bypass, and knew that they were hurting for jobs. This is a way to give the people more jobs, and a hope for a better future.

The other side was argued by Alice Jenkins, of the Oak Falls Antiques. She is a small business owner, and feels that without all of the in-town traffic, her business will suffer. She gave a few points to outline her concerns, but had no evidence to back it up. There was no background information, no references, and no facts like Walls had. Jenkins stated that the highway expansion would only create temporary jobs for construction, and leave the minimum wage jobs behind. Yes, the construction jobs are temporary. However, with the bypass happening, and attracting other businesses out there, it would create more jobs in the long run, jobs that are permanent and are not going anywhere. Jenkins also expressed concern about how the townspeople would not even use the new highway and how the travelers would not want to go two miles out of the way to fill up on gasoline or to stay the night at one of the local hotels. She also said that Walls did not listen to the locals' concerns about the issue.

Walls had a better point, and a better way of saying it. She backed up her main points with evidence and facts. She included numbers and studies. Jenkins did not reference a specific study or point out any numbers at all. She has a biased opinion based on the fact that she herself is a small business owner, and is afraid that she may be affected. The truth of the matter is, that the same people will still be going to her store, but with the new highway, it would attract more tourists into town to want to shop there. Jenkins simply did not back up her information as well as Walls did. Jenkins seemed not to even consider that eliminating the eighteen-wheelers through town would reduce the maintenance costs, therefore reducing the local taxes for them. She also did not consider that hotels and other national businesses are not minimum wage jobs, they are permanent and they do pay very well.

Credibility is also something to take into consideration here. Walls is a Representative of the state, and Jenkins is a small business owner. Walls has a job description to do what is best for her district and her state, and Jenkins just lives in it. Walls has tough decisions to make all of the time about the good of the people, taxes, and the good of the state. All Jenkins has to worry

about is whether she is getting business or not. These are two very different points of view, but Walls argued a better point that benefits everyone, rather than just one group of people.

Annotation for Response 8, Trait 1: Score Point 2

- The writer generates a text-based argument for the highway expansion. Although the response includes unsupported claims, the writer makes reasonable inferences about assumptions from the argument (*If the big trucks...were traveling on the roads for a long time...then it would ruin the historical value of those brick streets*).
- The writer distinguishes between claims by highlighting unsupported claims in Jenkins's argument ([Jenkins] *gave a few points to outline her concerns, but had no evidence to back it up [and] ...did not reference a specific study or point out any numbers at all*) and supported claims in Walls' argument ([Walls] *backed up her main points with evidence and facts*).
- The writer also evaluates the credibility of the sources (*Walls is a Representative of the state, and Jenkins is a small business owner. Walls has a job...to do what is best for her district...All Jenkins has to worry about is whether she is getting business or not*).
- Overall, the writer generates a text-based argument with evidence to support the evaluation.
- As a result, the response earns a score of 2 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 8, Trait 2: Score Point 2

- The writer has established an organizational structure that clearly conveys his or her message. The response begins with an introduction to the issue of the highway expansion and to the two opposing positions.
- The paragraphs that follow spell out each position in detail and analyze the strength of each.
- The final two paragraphs evaluate the presentation of the two positions and the credibility of the two writers.
- The ideas follow logically from one another, and the writer has used transitional devices to lead the reader from one topic to the next (*Yes, the construction jobs are temporary. However, with the bypass happening...*).
- Overall, the tone is appropriate to the purpose of the task.
- Therefore, Response 8 earns a score of 2 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 8, Trait 3: Score Point 2

- With some minor exceptions, the response shows a command of standard English conventions that demonstrates the writer's ability to express him- or herself coherently.
- Sentence structure is varied, apostrophes are used correctly, parallelism is maintained, and transitional devices are employed usefully.
- There are several instances of vague pronoun-antecedent references and incorrect comma use, but these do not interfere with comprehension.
- Standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing.
- Therefore, Response 8 earns a score of 2 for Trait 3.

Response 9:

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.

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 travelers 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.

Annotation for Response 9, Trait 1: Score Point 2

- The writer generates a text-based argument with strong evidence, stating that *“the letter provides a better-supported argument.”*
- The writer uses specific details from the text to evaluate the credibility of both authors (*a resident...is more credible...as compared to a representative*).
- The writer supports the argument by demonstrating how the letter to the editor has *“factual information”* to strengthen the arguments (*...correct in the fact [and] ...backed by logical explanations and facts with a few speculations*).
- The writer selects unsupported portions of Walls’ argument (*...mainly specked with anticipation and hopes*) and counters weak points with Jenkins’ facts (*...the author of the letter counters the argument*).
- Overall, the writer creates a strong argument using specific evidence focused on the textual sources.
- Therefore, the response earns a score of 2 for Trait 1.

Annotation for Response 9, Trait 2: Score Point 2

- The organizational structure of the response successfully conveys the writer’s message. Beginning with an introduction to the topic that clearly expresses the writer’s argument, the response then develops that argument logically over the following paragraphs.
- Each paragraph begins with a transitional device (*One example..., Another example...*), thereby sustaining a logical progression of ideas.
- Each paragraph contains evaluation and analysis of specific points from the two texts (*She concedes...but she argues*).
- The response concludes with a restatement of the writer’s argument within an analysis of the credibility of each text.
- The writer maintains a formal style and appropriate tone throughout.
- Therefore, Response 9 earns a score of 2 for Trait 2.

Annotation for Response 9, Trait 3: Score Point 2

- This lengthy response demonstrates correct sentence structure and variety throughout, and successfully employs language to achieve clarity and fluidity.
- The writer applies standard English conventions competently and effectively.
- He or she avoids wordiness and awkward sentences for the most part, uses punctuation appropriately, and demonstrates mastery of mechanics.
- Overall, the response is at an appropriate level for on-demand draft writing.
- Therefore, Response 9 earns a score of 2 for Trait 3.

Automated Scoring of Constructed Response Items on the 2014 GED® Test

The 2014 GED® test contains four Constructed Response (CR) items:

- one 45-minute Extended Response (ER) item on the Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) module,
- one 25-minute Extended Response (ER) item on the Social Studies module, and
- two 10-minute Short Answer (SA) items on the Science module.

The ER item in RLA is in its own separately-timed section of the test at the end of the first half of the RLA module (prior to a 10-minute break) and the ER item in Social Studies is in its own separately-timed section of the Social Studies module that appears as the last item on that test. The Science Short Answer items are distributed within the 90-minute Science module and are not timed separately—test-takers use their time-management skills to monitor their use of time on those items and are given guidelines as to approximately how much writing is expected in those responses (the test-taker is instructed to take up to about 10 minutes to read the question, and formulate, write, and edit their answer).

It was a critical goal of GED Testing Service to incorporate CR items into the design of the 2014 GED® test because these types of items are a key method of assessing a test-taker's higher order thinking skills as well as their skills in expressing themselves clearly in their own words. In order to ensure that the results of testing are available to test-takers in the quickest timeframe possible (because adults usually do not have the luxury of waiting days or weeks for their test results to be finalized), the GED Testing Service scores CR items using an automated scoring engine, that replicates the scoring process conducted by human scorers. Automated scoring is supplemented by human scorers for quality assurance purposes, described in more detail below.

The description that follows applies equally to all CR items, whether ER or SA.

During the item development process, experts in automated scoring are involved from the outset. This collaborative consultation and review helps to ensure that the test items are written in such a way to best ensure that student writing samples in response to the items have a high likelihood of being able to be reliably scored by the automated engine.

Once items have been written, reviewed by both scoring and content experts, and finalized, they are field-tested. At the conclusion of field testing, the written responses to the CR items are examined and a sample of test-taker responses selected for each of the items. Teams of content experts review the responses in a process known as "rangefinding." The purpose of rangefinding is to determine range and variety of responses that fulfill each score point as defined on the rubric that is very carefully constructed and designed to guide the overall evaluation of responses. This standard best-practice procedure for scoring of constructed response items results in the selection of exemplar responses at each score point. These responses are used to build

- anchor sets—human scorers' official guide that is used in evaluating test-taker responses),
- practice sets (sets of responses used in training human scorers), and
- qualification sets (sets of responses human scorers must score in agreement with rangefinding scores in order to qualify for appropriately and reliably score constructed responses).

When these materials have been compiled and when scorer training is complete, all of the test-taker responses from the field test are scored by humans, using the "double read with resolution" approach. Use of this scoring approach means that each and every response is read and scored independently by no fewer than two individuals. If the scores applied by the two different scorers are in exact agreement, the score for that response is final. If the two scores differ by only a single point, they are averaged and rounded up, effectively resulting in acceptance of the higher score point. If the scores differ by more than one point ("non-adjacent scores"), the response is read by a scoring leader (an expert scorer) who determines the correct score for that response in a process called "resolution." Because the ER items are scored across three key traits, each of which contains multiple dimensions that are weighed together in a compensatory fashion, each ER response is actually read by no fewer than six people. That is, each scorer is trained to score only one rubric trait, and two scorers trained on each of the three traits read each response. Therefore, it is possible for a single ER response to be read by up to 9 people, if the first two scores on all three traits are non-adjacent. This process ensures that the human scoring process produces the highest quality results and data.

When the scoring of all of the responses generated through field-testing is complete, a team of content experts, psychometricians and automated scoring experts reviews the range of scores for each constructed response item. At that time, some items are rejected because they do not meet the minimum criteria for inclusion on any operational GED® test or *GED Ready® Official Practice Test*. Items that survive this process then are used to train the automated scoring engine. Several hundred scored responses for each item are fed into the automated scoring engine. Then, several hundred more scored responses are used to test the reliability of scores generated by the automated engine. The engine evaluates each response on over 100 different dimensions in relation to the score that that response was given. Through this training and testing procedure, the automated engine "learns" how to score the items and is then able to replicate the scoring that was done by humans. Once this process is complete, data from the replication process is reviewed, and occasionally, if the scoring is determined to be insufficiently reliable to be used on an operational GED® test during this data review, some items may be allocated for use on the *GED Ready®* only since the CR items on the practice test are always scored by humans.

Only constructed response items that successfully survive the entirety of this process are placed on operational GED® test forms. Test-takers will respond to the constructed response items on the GED® test and their responses are fed into the automated engine for scoring immediately upon completion of each individual content area test. Of course, there may be a slight delay in submission of responses for scoring in certain testing situations, such as with tests administered within the corrections system, in which the testing center only uploads responses periodically for scoring. In these situations, additional steps need to be taken to upload the raw testing data (e.g., the test-takers' responses themselves) via a secure Internet connection.

Based on the experience of GED Testing Service with automated scoring during the field testing, standardization, and operational testing to date, the vast majority of test-taker responses (approximately 95%) are reliably scored by the automated scoring engine—in a process that is completed in nanoseconds. However, as with any process that involves the variability present in people's writing, there will be responses that the automated scoring engine will recognize as not fitting any type of response that was previously seen in the training of the engine. For example, an extremely short response that uses a great deal of advanced vocabulary might be unusual and therefore would be automatically flagged by the automated scoring engine as an "outlier" in need of human intervention for scoring. These "outlier" responses are securely routed electronically to a network of human scorers who have been trained to score the item using the anchor items and training sets created during the rangefinding process, as well as the scoring rubric that is used to provide overall guidance to the scoring process. These human scorers score the test-taker response using the "double read with resolution" framework that was also used to score the field test responses. As an additional note, the automated scoring engine is used only for English responses. Spanish responses are always scored by humans.

Although the human scoring process is efficient, it does require additional time. The GED Testing Service has committed to returning test results and a score report to test-takers within 3 hours of the completion of each test. Of course, the vast majority of results would actually be ready immediately because of advantage of the speed of the automated scoring, but, in order to manage test-taker expectations and avoid situations in which one test-taker at a site receives a score immediately while another test-taker does not, a 3-hour delay has been built into the process of delivering test scores.

Additional quality control procedures have also been built into the automated scoring system to ensure that test-takers receive reliable and valid scores from this process.

First, when the test was initially launched in 2014, the program implemented a process known as the "Initial Analysis Period" (IAP). The purpose of the IAP was to provide final validation of the automated scoring engine and its performance with the adult population of GED® test-takers. During the IAP, all CR responses were scored both by the automated scoring engine and by human scorers (using the "double-read with resolution" model as appropriate). This ensured that all test-takers were being evaluated fairly and that the automated scoring engine was operating properly.

Second, an audit procedure is conducted on a periodic on-going basis, in which a percentage of all test-taker responses scored by the automated engine will be reviewed by human scorers. This audit is *in addition* to the scoring of "outliers" described above and helps to ensure the ongoing accuracy of the system.

Because of the extreme care that GED Testing Service has taken with implementation of the automated scoring engine, in combination with human scoring and audit procedures, we are highly confident that our approach produces high quality results with reliable and valid test scores for our test-takers. Due to ongoing involvement of human scorers in the scoring process (through the IAP, evaluation of outlier responses, and the audit procedure), the database of known response types will grow over time. This expanded response base will be used to periodically retrain the automated scoring engine to further improve its performance.

Finally, another key benefit of using the automated scoring engine technology is that it allows GED Testing Service to integrate specific feedback on test-takers' performance on the extended response and short answer items right into the standard score report—a useful new feature that has never been possible in the past with the paper-based scoring system. This valuable process is part of GED Testing Service's effort to create a more learner-based testing system that helps guide test-takers to continuously improve their performance.