



State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

# **Grade 4**

# **Reading Language Arts**

Constructed Response  
Scoring Guide

Spring 2023

## General Information

Beginning with the 2022–2023 school year, reading language arts assessments include an extended constructed response, or essay, at every grade level. They also include short constructed-response questions. Students are asked to write the essay in response to a reading selection and will write in one of two modes: informational or argumentative.

This State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) constructed-response scoring guide provides student exemplars at all score points for extended constructed-response and short constructed-response prompts from the STAAR reading language arts grade 4 operational test. The prompts are presented as they appeared on the test, and responses were scored based on the rubrics included in this guide, which were developed with the input of Texas educators. Essays were scored using a five-point rubric. Short constructed responses in the reading domain were scored using a two-point prompt-specific rubric. Short constructed responses in the writing domain were scored using a one-point rubric.

The five-point rubric for extended constructed responses includes two main components: organization and development of ideas and conventions. A response earns a specific score point based on the ideas and conventions of that particular response as measured against the rubric. The annotation that accompanies each response is specific to that response and was written to illustrate how the language of the rubric is applied to elements of the response to determine the score the response received. Extended constructed responses are scored by two different scorers, and the scores are summed to create a student's final score, so students may receive up to 10 points for their essay.

The responses in this guide are actual student responses submitted online during the testing window. To protect the privacy of individual students, all names and other references of a personal nature have been altered or removed. Otherwise, the responses appear as the students wrote them and have not been modified.

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# **Grade 4 Reading Passage with Extended Constructed Response**

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**Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question.**

### **Austin’s Secret Salamander**

- 1 Splash!
- 2 Before you even had a chance to see, it’s gone, back into the water.
- 3 But if you had managed to get a look, you might have seen a salamander!

#### **All about Salamanders**

- 4 Salamanders look like lizards, but they are a kind of amphibian. That means they can live in water and on land. Amphibians are cold-blooded and have a skeleton with a backbone.
- 5 Salamanders are generally long and skinny. They have wet skin. There are hundreds of different species of salamanders that live all around the world.

#### **Texas’s Special Salamander**

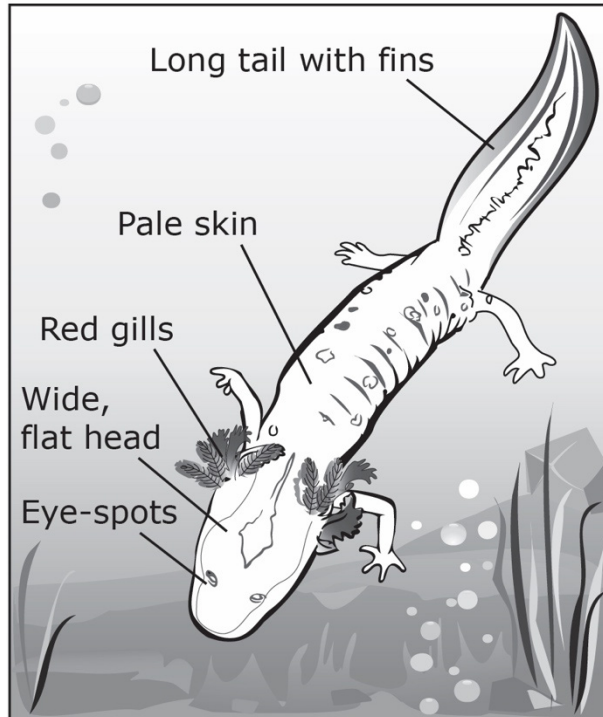
- 6 The Austin Blind Salamander lives in the capital of Texas, and it has only been spotted in one place—below the Barton Springs in Austin. While it’s not the only kind of salamander that lives in Barton Springs, it is a special one.
- 7 Below Barton Springs is an aquifer—the Edwards Aquifer. An aquifer is a layer of rock with holes going through it like honeycomb. Aquifers store water underground. The Austin Blind Salamander dwells in the water-filled caves of the Edwards Aquifer. Just as its name says, the Austin Blind Salamander is unable to see. It is so skilled at living in deep, dark places that it almost never swims to the surface. The salamander’s red gills allow it to stay underwater for most of its life.
- 8 Austin Blind Salamanders are usually between half an inch and three inches long. They come in a couple of different colors. Some salamanders are a shiny white, similar to pearls, while others are a light purple.
- 9 But there’s more to this salamander than how it looks. Scientists learned that it does an important job for the people of Austin.

#### **The Austin Blind Salamander at Work**

- 10 The Austin Blind Salamander is a keystone species. That means that the environment depends on the animal to stay balanced and healthy. Austin Blind Salamanders are especially important to humans because they help take care of the water in the Edwards Aquifer. This aquifer is a source of drinking water for over 2 million people. It also provides water for agriculture.
- 11 As a keystone species, Austin Blind Salamanders are important because they are predators that hunt other animals. If the salamanders left the aquifer, there would be a lot more of their prey animals in the environment and the quality of the water would change. This could make the water unsafe to drink. The salamanders are key to keeping the balance of animals the same, which means that the water stays healthy! It can be hard to see all the good these salamanders do. It’s almost as if they’re doing an invisible—but important—job!

- 12 The Austin Blind Salamanders need to be healthy in their environment. To stay healthy, the water in the aquifer needs to keep moving and stay around 70 degrees. If the salamanders stay healthy, the water is healthy.
- 13 So next time you see someone getting a drink of water, you can tell him or her to thank the salamanders!

Austin Blind Salamander



## Grade 4 Extended Constructed Response

### Prompt

Read the article “Austin’s Secret Salamander.” Based on the information in the article, write a response to the following:

Explain why the Edwards Aquifer is important in the article.

Write a well-organized informational composition that uses specific evidence from the story to support your answer.

Remember to —

- clearly state your central idea
- organize your writing
- develop your ideas in detail
- use evidence from the selection in your response
- use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar

Manage your time carefully so that you can —

- review the selection
- plan your response
- write your response
- revise and edit your response

Write your response in the box provided.

## Grade 4 Reading Passage with Extended Constructed Response

### Informational Writing Rubric

Score Point	Organization and Development of Ideas
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Central idea is clear and fully developed</b> The central idea is clearly identifiable. The focus is consistent throughout, creating a response that is unified and easy to follow.</li><li>• <b>Organization is effective</b> A purposeful structure that includes an effective introduction and conclusion is evident. The organizational structure is appropriate and effectively supports the development of the central idea. The sentences, paragraphs, or ideas are logically connected in purposeful and highly effective ways.</li><li>• <b>Evidence is specific, well chosen, and relevant</b> The response includes relevant text-based evidence that is clearly explained and consistently supports and develops the central idea. For pairs in grades 3-5, evidence is drawn from at least one text. The response reflects a thorough understanding of the writing purpose.</li><li>• <b>Expression of ideas is clear and effective</b> The writer's word choice is specific, purposeful, and enhances the response. Almost all sentences and phrases are effectively crafted to convey the writer's ideas and contribute to the overall quality of the response and the clarity of the message.</li></ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Central idea is present and partially developed</b> A central idea is presented, but it may not be clearly identifiable because it is not fully developed. The focus may not always be consistent and may not always be easy to follow. <b>Organization is limited</b> A purposeful structure that includes an introduction and conclusion is present. An organizational structure may not be consistent and may not always support the logical development of the central idea. Sentence-to-sentence connections and clarity may be lacking.</li><li>• <b>Evidence is limited and may include some irrelevant information</b> The response may include text-based evidence to support the central idea, but it may be insufficiently explained, and/or some evidence may be irrelevant to the central idea. For pairs, evidence is drawn from at least one of the texts. The response reflects partial understanding of the writing purpose.</li><li>• <b>Expression of ideas is basic</b> The writer's word choice may be general and imprecise and at times may not convey the writer's ideas clearly. Sentences and phrases are at times ineffective and may interfere with the writer's intended meaning and weaken the message.</li></ul>

Grade 4 Reading Language Arts  
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<p><b>1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Central idea is evident but not developed</b> A central idea is present but not developed appropriately in response to the writing task.</li> <li>• <b>Organization is minimal and/or weak</b> An introduction or conclusion may be present. An organizational structure that supports logical development is not always evident or is not appropriate to the task.</li> <li>• <b>Evidence is insufficient and/or mostly irrelevant</b> Little text-based evidence is presented to support the central idea, or the evidence presented is mostly extraneous and/or repetitious. Explanation of any evidence presented is insufficient and may be only vaguely related to the writing task. The response reflects a limited understanding of the writing purpose.</li> <li>• <b>Expression of ideas is ineffective</b> The writer’s word choice is vague or limited and may impede the quality and clarity of the essay. Sentences and phrases are often ineffective, interfere with the writer’s intended meaning, and impact the strength and clarity of the message.</li> </ul>
<p><b>0</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A central idea may be evident.</li> <li>• The response lacks an introduction and conclusion. An organizational structure is not evident.</li> <li>• Evidence is not provided or is irrelevant.</li> <li>• The response reflects a lack of understanding of the writing purpose.</li> <li>• The expression of ideas is unclear and/or incoherent.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Please note that if a response receives a score point 0 in the Development and Organization of Ideas trait, the response will also earn 0 points in the Conventions trait.</i></b></p>
<p><b>Score Point</b></p>	<p><b>Conventions</b></p>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p>Student writing demonstrates <b>consistent command</b> of grade-level-appropriate conventions, including correct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sentence construction</li> <li>• punctuation</li> <li>• capitalization</li> <li>• grammar</li> <li>• spelling</li> </ul> <p>The response has few errors, but those errors do not impact the clarity of the writing.</p>



Grade 4 Reading Language Arts  
Constructed Response Scoring Guide

<p><b>1</b></p>	<p>Student writing demonstrates <b>inconsistent command</b> of grade-level-appropriate conventions, including limited use of correct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sentence construction</li><li>• punctuation</li><li>• capitalization</li><li>• grammar</li><li>• spelling</li></ul> <p>The response has several errors, but the reader can understand the writer’s thoughts.</p>
<p><b>0</b></p>	<p>Student writing demonstrates <b>little to no command</b> of grade-level-appropriate conventions, including infrequent use of or no evidence of correct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sentence construction</li><li>• punctuation</li><li>• capitalization</li><li>• grammar</li><li>• spelling</li></ul> <p>The response has many errors, and these errors impact the clarity of the writing and the reader’s understanding of the writing.</p>

## Sample Student Responses

### Score Point 0

#### Response 1

Edward was just doing something and he did salamander that has something to hunt down so he can make the water safe or not

#### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 0**

In this response the writer does not provide a central idea. This response lacks an introduction and conclusion. An organizational structure is not evident. The expression of ideas is unclear (“Edward was just doing something . . . so he can make the water safe or not”). Overall, this response reflects a lack of understanding of the writing purpose.

#### **Conventions: 0**

Please note that if a response receives a score point 0 in the Organization and Development trait, the response will also earn 0 points in the Conventions trait.

#### Response 2

The edwards aquifer is important to the salamanders. an aquifer is alayer of rock with holes going through it like honeycomb. The aquifer save water underground. The austin blind salamanders dwells in the water filled caves of the edwards aquifer. Just as its name say's the austin blind salamanders can't see under water it is so skilled at living in deep, dark places that almost never swims to the surface . the salamanders red gills allow it to stay under water for most of it's life.

#### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 0**

In this response the writer presents the central idea that “The edwards aquifer is important to the salamanders” and “aquifer save water underground,” but it is not developed appropriately in response to the writing task. The remainder of the response consists of copied evidence from the selection that is irrelevant and does not clearly explain why the aquifer is important. An organizational structure is not evident. Overall, the response reflects a lack of understanding of the writing purpose.

#### **Conventions: 0**

Please note that if a response receives a score point 0 in the Organization and Development trait, the response will also earn 0 points in the Conventions trait.

## Score Point 1

### Response 1

why Edwards Aquifer is important because it help the be healthy and kepp the water balance and keep the 70 degrees other animals eat other animals sothe the Austin blind salamander then the Austin blind salamander so they keep it safe for the people.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 1**

In this response the writer presents the central idea that “Edwards Aquifer is important because it help the be healthy and kepp the water balance,” but it is not developed appropriately in response to the writing task. Although the organizational structure is supported with transitional words (“sothe,” “then the,” “so they”), the organizational structure does not support a logical development that is appropriate to the task. Evidence is insufficiently explained (“kepp the water balance,” “keep the 70 degrees”). The expression of ideas is unclear (“help the be healthy,” “sothe the Austin blind salamander then the Austin blind salamander”) and interferes with the writer’s intended meaning. Overall, the response reflects a limited understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 0**

The writer demonstrates little to no command of grade-level-appropriate conventions. Multiple errors in sentence construction and grammar (“it help the be healthy”; “it . . . kepp the water balance”; “it . . . keep the 70 degrees other animals eat”) impede understanding. Punctuation consists of only one period at the end of the response (response is a run-on sentence). The response has many errors that impact the clarity of the writing and the reader’s understanding of the writing.

## **Response 2**

Edwards aquifer is inportent to the story because. Helps animas.  
"salamader dwells in the water-filled cavse of the aquifer". helps peopel."  
is a source of water for over 2 milleon peopel."

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 1**

The writer presents the central idea that "Edwards aquifer is inportent to the story because. Helps animas . . . helps peopel," but it is not developed appropriately in response to the writing task. An introduction and conclusion are not evident. An organizational structure that supports logical development is weak because there is no explanation for the information presented ("salamader dwells in the water-filled cavse of the aquifer."; "is a source of water for over 2 milleon peopel"). Original word choice is limited and repetitious ("Helps animas," "helps peopel"). Overall, this response reflects a limited understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 0**

The writer demonstrates little to no command of grade-level-appropriate conventions with errors in sentence construction, including incomplete sentences, missing capitalization, and spelling errors ("inportent," "animas," "salamader," "cavse," "peopel," "milleon"). The response has many errors, and these errors impact the clarity of the writing and the reader's understanding of the writing.

## **Score Point 2**

### **Response 1**

Because the aquifer is a rock that lookes like a honycomb. The aquifer keeps water under groud. So just like the salmander the aquifer also has a part.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 1**

The writer presents a central idea that "The aquifer keeps water under groud," but it is not developed appropriately in response to the writing task. The organizational structure does not always logically support the development of the central idea, as the writer moves quickly from one idea to the next without clear sentence connections. The writer includes textual evidence ("the aquifer is a rock that lookes like a honycomb"; "The aquifer keeps water under groud") but does not explain how these details relate to the importance of the Edwards Aquifer. The expression of ideas is vague. ("So just like the salmander the aquifer also has a part.") Overall, the response reflects a limited understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 1**

The writer demonstrates an inconsistent command of grade-level-appropriate conventions, including awkwardly constructed sentences. While the writer makes errors in spelling ("lookes," "under groud," "salmander"), the reader can understand the writer's thoughts.

## **Response 2**

beckuse aquifer is important to the Austin Salamander so it can survive,  
it is important that the Salamander can survive beckuse  
it helps us survie and uthur animals to that drink or live in the water  
ther, Whth out it the water wold beckome un perified-not drink aboll,  
beckues uthur animals wold move in.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 2**

In this response, the writer presents a partially developed central idea that “aquifer is important to the Austin Salamander so it can survive.” A cause-effect organizational structure (“it is important that the Salamander can survive beckuse it helps us survie and uthur animals to that drink or live in the water”; “Whth out [the salamander] the water wold beckome un perified-not drink aboll, beckues uthur animals wold move in”) provides support for the central idea. Although the writer includes relevant text evidence, it is insufficiently developed without further explanation. The expression of ideas is imprecise at times (“it helps us survie and uthur animals to . . .”; “wold beckome un perified-not drink aboll, beckues uthur animals wold move in”) and may not convey the writer’s message clearly. Overall, this response reflects partial understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 0**

The writer demonstrates little to no command of grade-level-appropriate conventions with errors in sentence construction, including one long run-on sentence, incorrect use of commas, and spelling errors (“beckuse,” “survie,” “uthur,” “ther,” “Whth,” “wold,” “beckome,” “un perified,” “drink aboll,” “beckues”). The response has many errors, and these errors impact the clarity of the writing and the reader’s understanding of the writing.

## **Score Point 3**

### **Response 1**

It’s important because it provides water for more than 2 million people.If  
we didn’t have Edwards Aquifer it would be horrible for those  
people.Imagine if that was you.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 1**

The writer presents the central idea that “It’s important because it provides water for more than 2 million people,” but it is not developed appropriately to the writing task. A brief cause-effect organizational structure is attempted with sentence-to-sentence connections (“It’s important because,” “If we didn’t have Edwards Aquifer,” “Imagine if that”), but clarity is lacking due to the insufficiently explained evidence and vague word choice (“it would be horrible . . .,” “if that was you.”). Overall, the response reflects a limited understanding of the writing purpose.

**Conventions: 2**

The writer demonstrates consistent command of grade-level-appropriate conventions. Correct apostrophe use for contractions is evident (“It’s,” “didn’t”). There is one spelling error (“Imaigne”) and a missing comma after “Edwards Aquifer,” but overall sentence construction is clear and controlled. The response has few errors, and those errors do not impact the clarity of the writing.

**Response 2**

Edwards Aquifer is important because it's the austin blind salemander home and it help's there invorment and our invorment. the ivorment depends on the salmander to stay helathy because the Austin blind salmander helps the ivorment with cleaning the water so humans can drink water. But the water tempater has to be 70 degrees for them to live there. the salmander hunts prey.

**Organization and Development of Ideas: 2**

The writer presents a central idea that is partially developed. (“Edwards Aquifer is important because it’s the austin blind salemander home and it help’s there invorment and our invorment.”) Although a descriptive organizational structure is attempted, sentence-to-sentence connections lack clarity. This response does include text-based evidence that supports the central idea, but it is insufficiently explained (“the Austin blind salmander helps the ivorment with cleaning the water so humans can drink water”; “the water tempater has to be 70 degrees”; “the salmander hunts prey”). The expression of ideas is basic due to the repetitive word choice (“there invorment and our invorment,” “the ivorment depends,” “helps the ivorment”). Overall, this response reflects partial understanding of the writing purpose.

**Conventions: 1**

The writer demonstrates an inconsistent command of grade-level-appropriate conventions. While the writer has several errors in spelling (“salemander,” “help’s,” “there,” “invorment,” “helathy,” “tempater”), and an inconsistent command of sentence construction with missing beginning capitalization (“the ivorment,” “the salmander”), the reader can understand the writer’s thoughts.

### **Response 3**

do you live in the capital of texas because you have might have dranked from the edwards aquier witch where the austin blind salimance.

the edwards aquir is a main drink soure in the capital of texas in the text is says that" this aquifer is a sorce of water for 2 millian people it also porvides water to the agriculture."

the astin blind salimader gos exdided with out the aquifer in the text it says that" the astin blind salimander lives in the capital of texas, and it has only has been spotted in one place- below the barton springs in aston."

more preditors and prey would reprodouce in the text it says " if the salimance left the aquifer there would be alot more of thier prey animals in the invirement and the quity of the water would change."

the edwards aquifer is inmortant by because it is a source of water the astin salimander would go exdiced and a lot of pretiter and prey would reprodouce.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 3**

The writer of this response presents a clearly identifiable central idea in the last paragraph that "the edwards aquifer is inmortant by because it is a source of water the astin salimander would go exdiced [extinct] and a lot of pretiter [predator] and prey would reprodouce." The writer's focus is consistent throughout, creating a unified response. An effective introduction and conclusion are evident. The descriptive cause-effect organizational structure is appropriate and effectively uses relevant text evidence that consistently supports the central idea as the writer explains the importance of the aquifer to people in Austin ("the edwards aquir is a main drink soure . . ."; "this aquifer is a sorce of water for 2 millian people"; "it also porvides water to the agriculture") and connects the relationship of the Austin Blind Salamander to the quality of the water in the aquifer ("the astin blind salimader gos exdided with out the aquifer"; "the astin blind salimander . . . has only has been spotted in one place . . ."; "if the salimance left the aquifer . . . the quity [quality] of the water would change"). Purposeful word choice ("the edwards aquir is a main drink soure . . ."; "the astin blind salimader gos exdided [extinct]"; "more preditors and prey would reprodouce") helps enhance the writing. The response reflects a thorough understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 0**

The writer demonstrates little to no command of grade-level-appropriate conventions with several errors in sentence construction, including multiple run-on sentences, no capitalization (“do you,” “edwards aquier,” “texas,” “astin blind salimader,” “barton springs”), incorrect grammar (“you have might have dranked”) and spelling errors (“drinked,” “aquier,” “witch” [which], “salimance,” “aquir,” “soure,” “sorce,” “porvides,” “astin,” “salimader,” “gos,” “exdided,” “aston,” “preditors,” “reproduce,” “alot,” “thier,” “invirement,” “quity,” “inmortant,” “salimander,” “exdiced,” “pretiter”). The response has many errors, and these errors impact the clarity of the writing and the reader’s understanding of the writing.

### **Score Point 4**

#### **Response 1**

The reason the Edwards Aquifer is imporant in this article is because the Austin Blind Salamonder lives and gets food from the aquifer. If the salamanders were not there, then the water would not be healthy for the humans drinking water from it.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 2**

The writer of this response presents a partially developed central idea that “the Edwards Aquifer is imporant . . . because the Austin Blind Salamonder lives and gets food from the aquifer.” A brief cause-effect organizational structure provides support for the logical development of the central idea. The writer connects the importance of the aquifer to the repercussions of not having the salamanders in the aquifer. (“If the salamanders were not there, then the water would not be healthy for the humans.”) Although the response does include text-based evidence that supports the central idea, it is insufficiently explained. Word choice is basic (“lives and gets food from the aquifer”) and may not convey the writer’s message clearly. Overall, the response reflects partial understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 2**

The writer demonstrates consistent command of grade-level-appropriate conventions. The response has two spelling errors (“imporant,” “Salamonder”), but those errors do not impact the clarity of the writing.



## **Response 2**

The aquifer is inportant because the Austin blind salamander hunts at the aquifer,and somehow makes the water clean.The pargraph also said that the austin aquifer is a source of drinking water for over 2 million people.it also provides water for agriculture,and agriculture is very inportant.If the salamander left the aquifer,there would be a lot more of thier prey animals in the environment and the quality of the water wold change.this wold make the water unsafe to drink.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 3**

The writer presents the identifiable central idea that “The aquifer is inportant because the Austin blind salamander hunts at the aquifer,and somehow makes the water clean.” The descriptive cause-effect organizational structure is appropriate and effectively supports the central idea as the writer connects the importance of the salamander living in the aquifer to the effect of having safe water to drink. The response includes text-based evidence that is clearly explained and consistently supports the central idea (“the austin aquifer is a source of drinking water for over 2 million people”; “provides water for agriculture”; “If the salamander left the aquifer,there would be a lot more of thier prey . . . the quality of the water wold change”). The expression of ideas is clear, with word choice that helps make the writing more effective (“hunts at the aquifer . . . makes the water clean”; “wold make the water unsafe to drink”). The response reflects a thorough understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 1**

The writer demonstrates inconsistent command of grade-level-appropriate conventions. The response displays inconsistent use of capitalization at the beginning of sentences (“it also provides,” “this wold make”) and for proper nouns (“Austin blind salamander,” “austin”). Multiple spelling errors are present (“inportant,” “pargraph,” “thier,” “wold”). The response has one misplaced comma (“aquifer,and”), but some commas are correctly used in compound and complex sentences (“If the salamander left the aquifer,there would . . .”). The response has several errors, but the reader can understand the writer’s thoughts.

## Score Point 5

### **Response 1**

The Austin aquifer is important because millions of people rely on its clean water. It is only clean thanks to the Austin blind salamander, which preys on other animals that would make the water yucky and undrinkable. In the passage it says that "but there's more to this salamander than how it looks. Scientists learned that it does an important job for the people of Austin." And it also says "As a keystone species, Austin Blind Salamanders are important because they are predators that hunt other animals. If the salamanders left the aquifer, there would be a lot more of their prey animals in the environment and the quality of the water would change. This could make the water unsafe to drink." In conclusion, the salamanders and the aquifers are both extremely important.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 3**

The writer presents a clear central idea that "The Austin aquifer is important because millions of people rely on its clean water." The focus is consistent throughout, creating a unified response. The descriptive cause-effect organizational structure moves the response forward with transitions ("In the passage it says," "And it also says," "In conclusion") and appropriately supports the development of the central idea. An effective introduction ("The Austin aquifer is important because . . .") and a conclusion ("In conclusion, the salamanders and the aquifers are both extremely important") bring together the ideas and supporting evidence. The response includes specific, text-based support that is quoted and clearly explained ("It is only clean thanks to the Austin blind salamander . . ."; "Scientists learned that it does an important job for the people of Austin. . . . they are predators that hunt other animals. If the salamanders left the aquifer . . . the quality of the water would change . . . make the water unsafe"). Purposeful word choice ("millions of people rely on its clean water"; "would make the water yucky and undrinkable") helps enhance the writing. The response reflects a thorough understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 2**

The writer demonstrates a consistent command of grade-level-appropriate conventions. Sentence construction, punctuation, and grammar are correct. The response has few errors in capitalization ("Austin blind salamander") and spelling ("aquifers"), and those errors do not impact the clarity of the writing.

## **Response 2**

The Edwards Aquifer is important in the article because it is a home for the Austin Blind Salamander and other animals. It is also important because it is drinking water for over 2 million people and for agriculture. If the Edwards Aquifer was not here it would be harder to get water, and a lot of animals would be forced out of there home incuding the Austin Blind Salamander. It would be hard for the animals to find a new home. It is good that the Edwards Aquifer is there because it does a big part in keeping us safe and healthy.

### **Organization and Development of Ideas: 3**

The writer presents the clearly identifiable central idea that “The Edwards Aquifer is important . . . because it is a home for the Austin Blind Salamander and other animals.” A purposeful structure includes an introduction and conclusion. Additionally, the descriptive cause-effect organizational structure is appropriate, and ideas connect in logical and effective ways (“it is drinking water for over 2 million people and for agriculture”; “If the Edwards Aquifer was not here it would be harder to get water . . . animals would be forced out of there home . . . It would be hard for the animals to find a new home”). The response includes relevant paraphrased text-based evidence that is clearly explained and consistently supports and develops the central idea. Purposeful word choice (“a lot of animals would be forced out of there home incuding the Austin Blind Salamander”) helps enhance the writer’s message. Overall, this response reflects a thorough understanding of the writing purpose.

### **Conventions: 2**

The writer demonstrates a consistent command of grade-level-appropriate conventions. An error in spelling is present (“incuding”). The response has few errors, and those errors do not impact the clarity of the writing.

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# **Grade 4 Writing Short Constructed Response**

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## Grade 4 Writing Short Constructed Response

### Passage: "A Special Teacher"

#### Original Paragraph:

(14) Tabichi quickly learned many things about his new students. (15) He realized they were hungry and did not have school supplies. (16) It was hard for his students to focus on their studies when their bellies were rumbling and they didn't have anything to write with. (17) Tabichi began using his own salary to purchase food for his students. (18) He purchased supplies for his students too.

#### Prompt

In the box provided, combine the ideas in sentences 17 and 18 to create one clear and effective sentence.

#### Item-Specific Rubric

##### Score: 1

The response is a complete sentence that combines the ideas in a clear and effective way.

##### Score: 0

The response is not a complete sentence or does not combine the ideas in a clear and effective way.

## Sample Student Responses

### Score Point 0

#### Response 1

tabichi is willeng to do whatever to make hiss students learn

This response does not combine the ideas in a clear and effective way. The writer offers a general interpretation of the sentences (“willeng to do whatever to make hiss students learn”) but does not include specific ideas from sentences 17 and 18 such as “using his own salary,” “purchase food for his students,” “purchased supplies for his students.” As a result, the response does not satisfy the prompt as a sufficient combination of the sentences.

#### Response 2

Tabichi began useing his money to buy stuff for his students.He purchesd supplies and food for his students.

This response does not combine the ideas in a clear and effective way because it is still in the form of two sentences. The writer attempts to combine some of the ideas in the response’s second sentence. (“He purchesd supplies and food for his students.”) However, key ideas based on sentence 17 (“Tabichi began useing his money . . .”) remain in a separate sentence. Because the response did not effectively combine the ideas, this response receives no credit.

#### Response 3

Tabichi began using his own salary to purchase food for his students, he also got supplies for his students too.

This response does not combine the ideas in a clear and effective way. The writer replaces the period after sentence 17 with a comma. This creates a comma splice, which is two independent clauses connected by only a comma (“purchase food for his students, he also got supplies . . .”). Adding a conjunction or changing the comma to a semicolon are effective ways to combine two independent clauses.

#### Response 4

Tabichi purchased food and supplies for his students too.

This response does not combine the ideas in a clear and effective way. The response is incorrect because it omits important information from sentence 17 (“using his own salary”). To earn a score point 1, the new sentence must combine the important ideas of sentences 17 and 18 without changing their meaning.

## Score Point 1

### **Response 1**

tabich be gane using his own salary to purchase food for his students ,and  
he purchaese sulpplies for his stodents

The response is a complete sentence that combines the ideas clearly and effectively. The writer successfully combines the ideas by adding the conjunction *and* between sentences 17 and 18 to form a compound sentence. The revised sentence has misspellings (“tabich,” “be gane,” “purchaese,” “sulpplies,” “stodents”), missing beginning capitalization (“tabich”), and no ending punctuation after (“stodents”). However, these are acceptable introduced errors and do not detract from the score.

### **Response 2**

*Tabichi used his own money for food and supplies for students.*

This response clearly and effectively combines the ideas from sentences 17 and 18 into one complete sentence. The writer changes “using his own salary” in sentence 17 to “used his own money . . .,” which is acceptable because it retains the same meaning. The writer uses the coordinating conjunction *and* to combine the ideas in both sentences (“food and supplies”). All the essential ideas are included in the writer’s combination of the original sentences.

### **Response 3**

Since the kids had no supplies and were hungry, Tabichi paid for supplies  
and food for his students with his salary.

This response combines the ideas clearly and effectively. The writer combines the ideas from sentences 17 and 18 by adding the coordinating conjunction *and* between the things Tabichi bought for his students with his salary (“supplies and food”). Additional contextual information (“Since the kids had no supplies and were hungry,”) does not change the meaning of the sentence.

### **Response 4**

Tabichi began using his own salary to purchase food and supplies for his  
students.

The response is a complete sentence that combines the ideas in a clear and effective way. The writer uses the coordinating conjunction *and* to join the items Tabichi purchased for his students (“food and supplies”). Because the essential ideas from sentences 17 and 18 are included in the new sentence, this response earns full credit.