Grade 5 – Informational Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about different animal habitats and behavior. You are given three sources about animal behavior and hibernation.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an informational article** about hibernation. Using more than one source, develop a main idea about hibernation. Choose the most important information from the sources to support your main idea.*

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 6

The paper demonstrates a deep understanding of hibernation and develops a clear, insightful main idea with rich, relevant evidence. The writing shows synthesis across multiple sources and includes reasoning that explains how details support the larger concept of survival.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear and Purposeful Main Idea:** ○ The introduction defines hibernation as "a tool that some lucky members of the animal kingdom use to avoid the long harsh months of winter," setting a precise and engaging focus. Every paragraph connects back to this central idea of hibernation as a survival strategy.	➢ **Clarify the Main Idea:** ○ Add a brief definition of *hibernation* for readers unfamiliar with the term before discussing its usefulness.
✓ **Depth and Relevance of Supporting Details:** ○ The writer uses accurate and purposeful evidence from the sources—such as bears' preparation ("a bear fattens up on acorns and other high-fat foods") and protection ("safe for winter, cozy and warm beneath the blanket of snow"). These details illustrate understanding of both the biological and environmental aspects of hibernation.	➢ **Strengthen Range of Examples:** ○ Include one or two examples beyond bears (e.g., ground squirrels or raccoons) to show broader understanding.
✓ **Synthesis and Analysis of Ideas:** ○ Information is combined thoughtfully from multiple sources and analyzed beyond simple retelling. For instance, the writer explains that "hibernating also takes away the possibility of starvation during the winter months, for cubs," connecting scientific data to survival reasoning.	➢ **Expand Analysis:** ○ Explain *why* each adaptation (fat storage, den safety) supports animal survival in more scientific terms.
✓ **Focus and Insight:** ○ The conclusion ties all ideas together, emphasizing how hibernation benefits animals through protection, warmth, and energy conservation ("hibernation is truly a very important aspect for some animals' livelihoods"). This closure reinforces insight and unity.	➢ **Add Reflective Insight:** ○ End with a short statement about what this reveals about nature or animal instincts.

Organization: 5

The essay follows a logical structure with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Transitions and sequencing make the piece cohesive, though some sections could be divided for improved pacing.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Structural Framework:** ○ The essay begins with a strong introduction, follows with logically ordered body paragraphs (preparation → survival benefits → threats), and closes with synthesis.	➢ **Clarify Structure:** ○ Use brief topic sentences that state each paragraph's focus.
✓ **Effective Transitions:** ○ Transitional phrases such as "Now," "Coming back to grizzlies," and "It is now crystal clear" create flow and signal idea shifts effectively.	➢ **Improve Transitions:** ○ Add linking words such as "as a result" or "another advantage" for precision.
✓ **Paragraph Balance and Pacing:** ○ The long section describing bear cub protection could be divided for smoother reading. While ideas connect well, extended sentences make pacing uneven in parts.	➢ **Break Long Paragraphs:** ○ Separate the cub section into two shorter paragraphs to enhance readability.
✓ **Concluding Cohesion:** ○ The final paragraph reinforces the paper's focus and unifies the discussion of hibernation's benefits, though transitions between ideas could be slightly smoother.	➢ **Add Mid-Paragraph Cues:** ○ Use short transition phrases to remind the reader how each detail supports survival.

Voice: 5

The writer's tone is confident, engaging, and enthusiastic while remaining appropriate for an informational piece. The voice is distinctive and lively but occasionally slips into conversational phrasing.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaging Tone:** ○ Expressions such as "snoozing in a cozy cave" and "snuggled away in their dens" invite readers into the subject.	➢ Maintain Enthusiasm: ○ Keep expressive language but ensure it advances explanation rather than personal style.
✓ **Confidence and Ownership:** ○ Statements like "Without a shadow of a doubt…" show conviction and curiosity about science.	➢ Vary Intensity: ○ Alternate between strong declarative sentences and neutral exposition for pacing.
✓ **Audience Awareness:** ○ The writing explains complex ideas clearly and with enthusiasm suited for peers or general readers.	➢ Enhance Scientific Authority: ○ Integrate more factual phrasing to support confidence.
✓ **Occasional Inconsistency:** ○ Some phrases ("Well, that is exactly what happens…") slightly disrupt the professional tone expected in academic writing.	➢ Sustain Informative Voice: ○ Replace conversational fillers with transitional clarity ("This demonstrates that…").

Word Choice: 6

Word choice is precise, vivid, and purposeful. Vocabulary demonstrates academic command and effective imagery.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Precision and Accuracy:** ○ Uses specific, correct terms such as "starvation," "predators," "instinctual ability," and "hibernating mammals."	➢ **Streamline Adjectives:** ○ Remove occasional redundancy ("deep, cold snow").
✓ **Figurative and Descriptive Language:** ○ Phrases like "beneath the blanket of snow" and "vast amounts of food" create imagery while supporting accuracy.	➢ **Add Domain Synonyms:** ○ Replace common words with topic-appropriate ones (e.g., "prepare" → "condition," "eat" → "forage").
✓ **Vocabulary Variety:** ○ The writer avoids repetition by choosing strong verbs and descriptive modifiers throughout.	➢ **Continue Varied Diction Practice:** ○ Maintain balance between descriptive and precise language.
✓ **Purposeful Academic Word Use:** ○ Scientific vocabulary is woven in naturally, showing full comprehension of source material.	➢ **Integrate More Scientific Detail:** ○ Include key terms from sources (e.g., "brown fat," "hypothalamus") to enrich technical accuracy.

Sentence Fluency: 5

Sentences read naturally with varied structure and rhythm. A few are overly long, but overall pacing supports clarity and engagement.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Variety of Structures:** ○ The essay includes both complex and compound sentences ("Since this seemingly unreachable amount of food…").	➢ **Use Short Sentences for Impact:** ○ Insert concise statements for emphasis.
✓ **Smooth Flow:** ○ Sentences connect logically, creating rhythm without abrupt stops.	➢ **Check Punctuation:** ○ Review commas to ensure pauses reflect natural reading flow.
✓ **Pacing and Readability:** ○ Long descriptive sentences convey depth but can tire the reader when unbroken.	➢ **Balance Sentence Length:** ○ Break overly long sentences into two parts.
✓ **Transitional Cohesion:** ○ Sentence beginnings often vary, though some start repetitively ("Now," "Coming back to…").	➢ **Vary Openings:** ○ Start some sentences with adverbs or dependent clauses.

Conventions: 5

The writing demonstrates strong control of grammar, capitalization, and punctuation, with only minor errors in comma placement and sentence length.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Grammar Control:** ○ Sentences are complete and well-structured with correct subject-verb agreement.	➢ **Proof for Overuse:** ○ Remove extra commas after introductory adverbs when unnecessary.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Punctuation Accuracy:** ○ Quotation marks, capitalization, and periods are used correctly, though commas occasionally appear where unnecessary.	➢ **Check Quotation Integration:** ○ Ensure punctuation inside quotation marks matches citation rules.
✓ **Spelling and Usage:** ○ Complex words (“hibernation,” “instinctual”) are spelled correctly throughout.	➢ **Maintain Consistency:** ○ Verify capitalization for all source references.
✓ **Sentence Boundaries:** ○ One or two comma splices suggest areas for mechanical review but do not obscure meaning.	➢ **Review Comma Placement:** ○ Focus on separating independent clauses correctly.

Use of Sources: 6

The essay integrates information seamlessly from all three sources, showing synthesis, accuracy, and relevance. The use of quotations and paraphrasing supports the main idea effectively.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Source Accuracy:** ○ Details about fattening on acorns (Source 3), salmon and snow dens (Source 1), and Dr. Vaughan’s bear research (Source 3) are factual and used correctly.	➢ **Paraphrase More Frequently:** ○ Limit direct quotes by summarizing evidence in your own words.
✓ **Purposeful Integration:** ○ The writer embeds quotes naturally (“‘She stopped to catch a mouse with one swat of her paw…’”) followed by interpretation that connects to survival.	➢ **Explain After Quoting:** ○ Include a sentence clarifying how each quote supports your claim.
✓ **Synthesis Across Texts:** ○ Evidence from multiple sources builds layered understanding—energy storage, protection, reproduction, and safety all linked under the theme of survival.	➢ **Add Source Variety in Each Paragraph:** ○ Blend at least two sources per main idea for stronger synthesis.
✓ **Citation Consistency:** ○ Citations appear regularly, though capitalization (“source 1”) should be standardized to “Source 1.”	➢ **Ensure Citation Consistency:** ○ Capitalize all “Source” references uniformly.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Ideas and Content:

Evidence Chain Mapping:

- Students trace how each fact links to the main idea with a "fact → reason → outcome" chain.

Synthesis Web:

- Have students connect ideas from different sources to one central claim about survival.

Comparative Expansion Task:

- Assign students a new animal to research and compare hibernation strategies in a short paragraph using the same explanatory logic.

Organization:

Paragraph Mapping Workshop:

- Students outline the purpose of each paragraph and evaluate balance.

Transition Match Game:

- Match transition types (addition, contrast, conclusion) to paragraphs needing connection.

Outline-to-Essay Comparison:

- Students reconstruct an outline from the essay to check for logical sequencing.

Voice:

Voice Reflection Chart:

- Students analyze sentences for tone and identify when it strengthens or weakens formality.

Tone Transformation Exercise:

- Practice revising lively sentences into academic style while maintaining engagement.

Mentor Text Comparison:

- Compare this essay's tone to an article from *Time for Kids* to discuss how professionals balance energy and accuracy.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Word Choice:

Domain Word Scavenger Hunt:

- Highlight scientific terms from sources to include purposefully in writing.

Descriptive Revision Workshop:

- Students revise a paragraph using sensory or figurative details tied to facts.

Precision Ladder Chart:

- List weak-to-strong synonyms to emphasize how word choice shapes meaning.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Chart:

- Color-code sentence types to visualize rhythm.

Read-Aloud Practice:

- Students record themselves reading to adjust for flow.

Syntax Shuffle:

- Students rearrange clauses to explore phrasing options.

Conventions:

Comma Challenge:

- Provide sentences to edit for proper punctuation and boundary control.

Peer Proofreading Station:

- Pairs identify and explain one grammar or punctuation fix per paragraph.

Mentor Sentence Study:

- Highlight examples of correct citation punctuation in modeled informational texts.

Use of Sources:

Quote Sandwich Modeling:

- Teach students to introduce, explain, and interpret every piece of evidence.

Cross-Source Web:

- Students draw connections among facts from different texts to visualize synthesis.

Citation Consistency Practice:

- Students proof for uniform source formatting using modeled examples.