Grade 5 – Informational Writing Work Sample: Approaching

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: 3

The paper shows a basic understanding of hibernation and includes some accurate information from the sources. However, it relies on simple listing of facts and lacks elaboration and synthesis. The main idea—that hibernation is difficult to study—is clear but underdeveloped and not consistently supported with reasoning.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear but Limited Main Idea:** ○ The introduction begins with a focused claim: "Hibernation is not easy to study." This establishes purpose, but it narrows the topic to *studying* hibernation rather than explaining *what hibernation is* or *why it matters* for survival.	➢ **Refine the Focus:** ○ Restate the main idea to address *how* hibernation helps animals survive, not just that it's "hard to study."
✓ **Accurate but Surface-Level Details:** ○ Facts about bears looking for "rodents, insects, and berries before hibernation" and building dens from "leaves and brush" are drawn accurately from Source 1 (*Do Not Disturb*), but they are presented as standalone facts without commentary or connection.	➢ **Add Purposeful Explanations:** ○ After each fact, include reasoning such as "This helps bears survive when food is scarce in winter."
✓ **Limited Analysis or Explanation:** ○ The statement "The food that they ate gives them fat which helps keep them warm" is correct but not expanded upon. The reader learns *what* happens, not *why* or *how* it supports the main idea.	➢ **Develop Connections:** ○ Explain how steps—food gathering, den preparation, temperature changes—work together as a process.
✓ **Weak Closure and Synthesis:** ○ The conclusion ("Its hard but is not easy") repeats the introduction rather than summarizing insights. It fails to tie together preparation, temperature change, and survival.	➢ **Revise the Conclusion:** ○ End by summarizing what animals gain from hibernation or what scientists can learn from studying it.

Organization: 3

The essay follows a chronological order but lacks clear transitions and unity between sections. The introduction and conclusion are repetitive, and paragraph structure needs refinement to show clear relationships between ideas.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Logical but Basic Structure:** ○ The paper roughly follows the order of events (preparation → den building → hibernation), but ideas appear in isolated chunks.	➢ **Combine Short Sentences:** ○ Merge related ideas to improve flow and coherence.
✓ **Weak Transitions:** ○ Paragraphs begin abruptly ("Food is scarce close to winter…" "Getting ready for hibernation is not easy…"), offering little guidance for readers about how one idea connects to the next.	➢ **Add Transitional Phrases:** ○ Use words like "First," "Next," and "Finally" to signal the sequence of preparation and hibernation.
✓ **Uneven Paragraph Development:** ○ Each section contains short, simple statements without elaboration, leading to a choppy flow.	➢ **Link Ideas Across Paragraphs:** ○ Use cause-and-effect transitions ("Because food is scarce, bears must eat more before winter").
✓ **Ineffective Closure:** ○ The final sentence simply restates difficulty ("Its hard but is not easy") without reflecting on what was learned or summarizing the main points.	➢ **Write a Stronger Conclusion:** ○ End by summarizing how the steps of hibernation help animals survive.

Voice: 3

The tone is factual but flat, showing minimal engagement with the topic. While the writer stays on task, the lack of descriptive phrasing and personal connection makes the piece feel mechanical.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Appropriate but Limited Tone:** ○ The language remains straightforward and neutral, avoiding errors but lacking enthusiasm or curiosity.	➢ **Use Engaging Verbs:** ○ Replace plain verbs like "look for" with vivid ones like "forage" or "search eagerly."
✓ **No Distinctive Voice:** ○ The essay reads like a list of statements without any sense of the writer's interest or confidence.	➢ **Show Interest:** ○ Add phrases that show curiosity ("Scientists wonder how animals can sleep for months without food").
✓ **Consistent Objectivity:** ○ The tone stays factual throughout, which is appropriate for informational writing, but the absence of strong verbs or sentence variation limits engagement.	➢ **Balance Facts with Style:** ○ Keep the tone academic but lively to help readers stay interested.
✓ **Limited Reader Connection:** ○ Without commentary or reflective statements, the piece doesn't invite readers to think or wonder about hibernation.	➢ **Add Descriptive Observations:** ○ Include sensory language ("snug den," "cold wind," "quiet winter sleep").

Word Choice: 3

Vocabulary is functional and mostly accurate but lacks precision and variety. Occasional word errors and simple phrasing limit sophistication.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Accurate but Plain Vocabulary:** ○ Words like "food," "den," and "warm" are correct but repetitive and general.	➢ **Replace Everyday Words:** ○ Use "forage," "energy," "instinct," and "denning" instead of "look for" and "bed."
✓ **Missed Domain Terms:** ○ The piece omits key scientific vocabulary from the sources, such as "hibernating mammals," "hypothalamus," or "body temperature regulation."	➢ **Add Science Words:** ○ Include terms from the sources to show deeper topic understanding.
✓ **Some Misuse of Words:** ○ "Ether" appears instead of *either*, and "cause" is used incorrectly for "because," slightly disrupting clarity.	➢ **Correct Word Forms:** ○ Fix "cause" → "because" and "ether" → "either."
✓ **Lack of Imagery:** ○ The essay gives no sensory or descriptive language to help readers visualize what happens during hibernation.	➢ **Add Descriptive Detail:** ○ Describe how animals prepare dens or what a winter setting looks like.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are generally complete but lack rhythm and variety. Repetitive sentence beginnings and short, choppy patterns reduce fluency.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Simple Sentence Structures:** ○ Most sentences are short and declarative ("Food is scarce close to winter." "Bears like to look for rodents.").	➢ **Add Compound Sentences:** ○ Use linking words like "because" or "so" to show relationships.
✓ **Repetitive Beginnings:** ○ Several sentences start with the same subject ("Bears… Bears…"), creating monotony.	➢ **Vary Sentence Openings:** ○ Begin sentences with time or place phrases ("Before winter begins, bears search for food").
✓ **Limited Transitions:** ○ Few connecting phrases appear between sentences, making the flow abrupt.	➢ **Combine Sentences:** ○ Merge related ideas using conjunctions ("Bears gather food and prepare their dens before temperatures drop").
✓ **Readable but Uneven Rhythm:** ○ Although easy to follow, the text lacks the smoothness expected in proficient writing.	➢ **Check Rhythm Aloud:** ○ Read your essay aloud to spot repetitive patterns.

Conventions: 3

Grammar and punctuation are mostly correct, but frequent small errors (spelling, commas, and capitalization) reduce polish and readability.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Basic Control of Grammar:** ○ Sentences are complete and understandable, but informal constructions ("cause" instead of "because") weaken correctness.	➢ **Edit for Word Accuracy:** ○ Replace "cause" with "because" and fix "ether" → "either."

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Errors:** ○ "Ether" for *either* and inconsistent use of "Its" vs. "It's" appear multiple times.	➢ **Proofread for Homophones:** ○ Watch for words that sound the same but have different meanings.
✓ **Punctuation:** ○ Commas are missing after introductory phrases ("Now it is time for hibernation").	➢ **Add Commas:** ○ Include commas after openers like "Now" and "First."
✓ **Capitalization:** ○ The title "HIBERNATION" is correctly capitalized, but inconsistent capitalization of "Its" vs. "It's" appears.	➢ **Check Apostrophes:** ○ Use *It's* for "it is" and *Its* for possession.

Use of Sources: 3

The writer effectively integrates accurate information from multiple sources, demonstrating a clear understanding of animals' adaptations to different environments. Details are paraphrased in the writer's own words, and examples from various habitats show thoughtful selection and comprehension of source material.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Reference to Source 1:** ○ Mentions of food gathering, den digging, and temperature changes align directly with *Do Not Disturb*.	➢ **Blend Source Ideas:** ○ Combine two sources in one paragraph to show synthesis.
✓ **Missing Multiple Sources:** ○ No evidence from *Do Bears Hibernate?* or *A Barn for Bears* appears, limiting synthesis.	➢ **Incorporate More Sources:** ○ Add at least one idea from each of the three provided texts.
✓ **No Citation Phrases:** ○ Facts are presented as general knowledge ("Bears know it is time…") without attribution.	➢ **Use Citation Introductions:** ○ Start evidence with "According to Source 2…" or "Dr. Vaughan explains that…"
✓ **Limited Interpretation:** ○ The writer reports facts but does not explain their significance or connection to hibernation's purpose.	➢ **Explain Evidence:** ○ After each fact, include a short sentence connecting it to survival.

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:

"How and Why" Expansion Ladder:

- Students add "because" or "so that" sentences after each fact to strengthen reasoning.

Idea Sequencing Sort:

- Provide statements from the sources (e.g., eating, sleeping, body changes) for students to arrange in cause-effect order.

Conclusion Building Workshop:

- Model closing statements that summarize insights instead of repeating the introduction.

Organization:

Transition Bridge Chart:

- Students choose transitions that connect preparation, denning, and hibernation phases.

Paragraph Reordering Activity:

- Cut apart essay sentences for students to reorganize into a logical sequence.

Conclusion Rewrite Practice:

- Model strong closing statements that unify the topic rather than repeat it.

Voice:

Voice Contrast Activity:

- Compare two versions of the same paragraph—flat vs. engaging—and analyze what makes one more effective.

Verb Upgrade Game:

- Students replace common verbs in their drafts with stronger, topic-specific alternatives.

"Curiosity Sentences" Exercise:

- Students write one wonder or insight statement per paragraph to humanize informational tone.

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 Vocabulary Sort:

- Students identify key science terms and use them accurately in sentences.

Word Precision Ladder:

- Create tiers from basic to advanced vocabulary to practice upgrading.

Sensory Word Brainstorm:

- Students list words that describe sights, sounds, and feelings of winter to enrich description.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Chart:

- Students highlight starting words to identify repetition.

Combine and Expand Practice:

- Merge short statements into complex sentences for flow.

Fluency Read-Alouds:

- Encourage students to read drafts aloud to refine pacing and rhythm.

Conventions:

Editing Stations:

- Students rotate through spelling, punctuation, and capitalization review tasks.

Mini-Lesson on Homophones:

- Practice *its/it's* and *there/their* distinctions with short sentences.

Comma Practice Cards:

- Provide models for adding commas after introductory clauses.

Use of Sources:

Color-Coded Source Integration:

- Students highlight which source each sentence comes from to check balance.

Quote + Explanation Pairing:

- Model how to follow a fact or quote with a "this shows…" statement.

Source Summary Chart:

- Create a three-column organizer for key ideas from each source to encourage balanced use.