The Bell Debate

Evaluate evidence for a school decision

9.RL.21 "Locate and determine the usefulness of relevant and credible information to answer a question, solve a problem, or defend a position."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that could help answer the bell-time question, then circle a limit of each detail so you can judge how useful it is.

Should Brookside Start Later?

1. At Brookside High, the student council is weighing a question: Should the first bell move from 7:45 to 8:15 a.m.? A member finds a webpage from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It says teenagers ages 13 to 18 need 8 to 10 hours of sleep per 24 hours. The page draws on health research, but it does not report how long Brookside students sleep. The member also finds a student blog post titled 'Later Bells Fix Everything.' Its writer describes feeling exhausted in first period, then claims every student would earn better grades with a later start.

2. To check local conditions, the council requests an attendance report from Brookside's office. The report counts 38 instances of late arrival during first period across the first 20 school days, but it does not say whether students were late because of sleep, traffic, or something else. A student posts an online poll asking classmates if they favor an 8:15 start. Of the 47 students who choose to reply, 39 vote yes. The poll shows what those respondents prefer, not what all 900 Brookside students think. Neither source measures whether changing the bell would improve attendance.

3. The district transportation office's current route plan lists the same buses serving Brookside and the middle school. Middle school pickups begin at 8:35 a.m., so moving Brookside's bell could affect the second routes. The plan does not show how long a revised Brookside trip would take. A bus company's advertisement offers 'easy scheduling for any school' but provides no route times or staffing figures. Council members have useful pieces of evidence, yet they still need travel-time estimates and a wider student survey before making a firm recommendation. A source can be trustworthy on one point and incomplete for the decision at hand.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the CDC webpage help the council consider a later start, and what can it not tell them?

2. What can the online poll tell the council? Why is it weak evidence for what the whole school wants?

3. Why can't the attendance report show that a later bell would reduce late arrivals?

4. Which is more useful for checking whether buses could handle the change, the district route plan or the bus company's advertisement? What information is still missing?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- to five-sentence note to the council that takes a provisional position on the bell change. Use two different sources from the passage, explain what each can and cannot show, and name one piece of information to gather before a final vote.

ANSWER KEY

The Bell Debate

GRADE 9 · 9.RL.21

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three details that could help answer the bell-time question, then circle a limit of each detail so you can judge how useful it is. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the CDC webpage help the council consider a later start, and what can it not tell them?	**It provides research-based guidance on teenagers' sleep needs, but it does not show how long Brookside students sleep.**
2	What can the online poll tell the council? Why is it weak evidence for what the whole school wants?	**It shows that 39 of 47 respondents favor an 8:15 start. Students chose whether to reply, so their views may not represent all 900 students.**
3	Why can't the attendance report show that a later bell would reduce late arrivals?	**It counts late arrivals but gives neither their causes nor evidence about what would happen after a bell change.**
4	Which is more useful for checking whether buses could handle the change, the district route plan or the bus company's advertisement? What information is still missing?	**The district route plan is more useful because it gives local bus assignments and middle school pickup times. Revised Brookside travel times are still missing.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would support testing an 8:15 start, but I would not vote for a permanent change yet. The CDC's sleep guidance explains teenagers' sleep needs, but it does not show whether Brookside students would sleep longer. The district route plan identifies a possible bus conflict, but it does not give travel times for a revised schedule. I would ask the transportation office to calculate those times before a final vote. If buses cannot reach the middle school on time, the council should consider another option.

Accept different provisional positions if the student accurately uses two sources, identifies a limit for each, and requests information that would help decide the issue.