Bell Time Debate

Evaluate claims, evidence, and reasoning in a public argument.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8 "Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the central claim and each piece of evidence. Circle statements that conflict with the passage, go beyond the evidence, or attack a person instead of addressing a reason; write F for a false statement and FL for fallacious reasoning beside each one.

A Later Bell Proposal

1. At Thursday's Riverton school board meeting, junior Maya Ortiz urged the district to move high school's first bell from 7:35 to 8:30. Her main claim was that a later start would give students a better chance to get enough sleep and arrive ready to learn. She cited the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later to support adolescent sleep. Ortiz also reported that 68 percent of Riverton high school students who answered a district survey said they usually sleep fewer than eight hours on school nights, while 32 percent said eight hours or more.

2. Her argument also used results from a nearby district that shifted its first bell to 8:35 last year. According to a report from that district, student tardiness fell by 12 percent during the first semester, although the report did not examine grades or attendance over a full year. Ortiz acknowledged that Riverton would need to revise bus routes and after-school schedules. Still, she said the change was worth studying because the medical recommendation, local sleep survey, and tardiness result point in the same direction. She asked the board to commission a cost study before voting.

3. During public comment, another speaker said, "Every student who answered that survey sleeps fewer than eight hours, so the board must approve it." The survey showed that 68 percent of respondents reported fewer than eight hours of sleep, while 32 percent reported eight hours or more. The speaker added, "Anyone who worries about bus costs cares more about buses than children." A third speaker declared that moving the bell would guarantee higher test scores, even though the nearby district's report measured tardiness only. These statements may sound forceful, but board members still need to weigh costs, schedules, and stronger local evidence.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1 What is Ortiz's central claim, and what action does she ask the board to take before voting?

2 Explain why the nearby district's tardiness result is relevant evidence. Then identify one limit on how much that result can prove.

3 Which statement in paragraph 3 is false according to the survey results? Correct the statement using the passage's evidence.

4 Identify the flaw in the claim about bus costs and the flaw in the claim that a later bell will guarantee higher test scores.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence recommendation to the school board about whether it should approve the later bell immediately or study it first. Use two details from the passage, identify one flawed statement, and explain why the available evidence is or is not sufficient for an immediate decision.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the central claim and each piece of evidence. Circle statements that conflict with the passage, go beyond the evidence, or attack a person instead of addressing a reason; write F for a false statement and FL for fallacious reasoning beside each one. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is Ortiz's central claim, and what action does she ask the board to take before voting?	**She claims a later high school start would better support student sleep and readiness to learn. She asks the board to commission a cost study before voting.**
2	Explain why the nearby district's tardiness result is relevant evidence. Then identify one limit on how much that result can prove.	**It is relevant because it shows that a later start was associated with lower tardiness in a similar district. It cannot prove effects on grades or long-term attendance because the report covered only one semester and did not examine those outcomes.**
3	Which statement in paragraph 3 is false according to the survey results? Correct the statement using the passage's evidence.	**The statement that every survey respondent sleeps fewer than eight hours is false. The survey found that 68 percent reported fewer than eight hours, while 32 percent reported eight hours or more.**
4	Identify the flaw in the claim about bus costs and the flaw in the claim that a later bell will guarantee higher test scores.	**The bus-cost claim attacks people who raise a concern instead of addressing the cost concern. The test-score claim goes beyond the evidence because the cited report measured tardiness, not test scores.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The board should commission the cost study before deciding on a later bell. The medical recommendation and the local survey make the proposal worth investigating, and the nearby district's lower tardiness offers relevant support. However, one semester of tardiness data cannot guarantee higher test scores because grades were not measured. The claim that every survey respondent sleeps fewer than eight hours is false, so it should not be used as a reason to approve the change immediately.

Accept equivalent descriptions of the central claim, relevant evidence, limitations, false statement, and fallacies. For the open response, accept either recommendation if it uses two accurate passage details, identifies a genuine flaw, and explains the sufficiency of the evidence.