

The Bell Debate

Trace how a model argument combines claims, evidence, and reasoning.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 "Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the writer's claim and each reason, circle specific evidence, and number the sentences that answer a counterclaim so you can see how the argument is built.

A Smarter Morning Bell

- ① High schools should begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m. because adolescents' biological clocks shift later during puberty. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools start at 8:30 or later so students can get enough sleep. This is not simply a preference for sleeping in. Teenagers who must wake before their bodies are ready may arrive alertness-deprived, making first-period learning harder. A later bell schedule would match school timing to a well-established developmental pattern and give students a fairer chance to learn when they are mentally prepared.
- ② Research from Seattle provides a concrete reason to take that recommendation seriously. In 2016, two public high schools moved their start time about 55 minutes later. A 2018 study of students at those schools found that their median sleep duration increased by 34 minutes. The study also reported a 4.5 percent increase in median grades after the schedule change. These results do not prove that later starts alone caused every grade increase, since many influences affect grades. Still, more sleep followed the change, and the academic result supports the reasonable conclusion that a later start can improve conditions for learning.
- ③ Critics may point out that later start times can complicate bus routes, sports practices, and after-school jobs. Districts should weigh those costs, but inconvenience is not a stronger reason than students' health and learning. A district can adjust transportation contracts, practice schedules, or elementary routes, whereas an individual teenager cannot easily change the biological shift that makes early sleep difficult. The Seattle evidence also gives decision makers a measurable benefit to compare with logistical costs. Therefore, districts should plan a transition to an 8:30 start rather than treating the current schedule as fixed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is the writer's central claim? Give one reason the writer uses to support it.

2 Identify two specific pieces of Seattle evidence from the passage. How do they support the writer's claim?

3 Why does the writer state that the Seattle results do not prove that later starts alone caused the grade increase?

4 What counterclaim does the writer address, and how does the writer respond to it?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word recommendation to a school board that either supports or opposes an 8:30 a.m. high school start. State a clear claim, use two specific pieces of evidence from the passage, and address one counterclaim with reasoning.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the writer's claim and each reason, circle specific evidence, and number the sentences that answer a counterclaim so you can see how the argument is built. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the writer's central claim? Give one reason the writer uses to support it.	High schools should start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. One reason is that adolescents' biological clocks shift later during puberty, so early schedules can make learning harder.
2	Identify two specific pieces of Seattle evidence from the passage. How do they support the writer's claim?	After the later start, median sleep increased by 34 minutes and median grades increased by 4.5 percent. These results support the idea that later starts can improve students' readiness and learning conditions.
3	Why does the writer state that the Seattle results do not prove that later starts alone caused the grade increase?	The writer acknowledges that many factors can affect grades. This limitation makes the conclusion careful: the evidence supports, but does not prove, the claim.
4	What counterclaim does the writer address, and how does the writer respond to it?	The counterclaim is that later starts can disrupt buses, sports, and after-school jobs. The writer responds that districts can adjust schedules and routes, but teenagers cannot easily change their biological sleep patterns.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

School boards should adopt an 8:30 a.m. high school start. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends this time or later for middle and high schools, and Seattle students slept 34 more minutes after two schools delayed their schedules. The same study reported a 4.5 percent rise in median grades, so the change may strengthen learning as well as rest. Opponents reasonably worry about buses and athletics. However, districts can redesign routes and practice times, while students cannot simply override the later biological clocks of adolescence. The likely sleep and academic benefits justify solving those scheduling problems.

Accept equivalent claims and accurately cited evidence from the passage. For the open response, look for a defensible claim, at least two relevant details, logical explanation, and a meaningful response to a counterclaim.