

The Bell Debate

Analyze how a balanced proposal addresses evidence, limits, and audience concerns.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1b “Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the main claim and the counterclaim. Circle evidence for each, then write S beside each strength and L beside each limitation you find.

Should Riverton High Start Later?

- ① Riverton High should begin at 8:30 a.m., thirty minutes later than its current schedule. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 or later because many adolescents naturally fall asleep later and still need adequate sleep. A later bell could help students arrive more alert for first-period classes. This claim is strongest for families concerned about learning and safety, since tired teen drivers may be less attentive. Still, the recommendation does not guarantee that every student will sleep longer. Students who keep late jobs, use screens late at night, or have early responsibilities might not gain the full benefit.
- ② Others argue that Riverton High should keep its 8:00 a.m. start. The district shares buses with elementary schools, and changing the high school schedule could require new routes, additional buses, or altered elementary schedules. Coaches also worry that later dismissal would shorten practice time before games, especially when daylight fades early. These are practical concerns, not excuses to ignore. Their strength is that they identify costs and effects on younger students and activities. Their limitation is that they do not show that the current start time is best for teenagers. The board should ask for route estimates and schedules before deciding.
- ③ Riverton could test the later start for one semester instead of changing it permanently. During the trial, the district could compare attendance, first-period tardiness, bus costs, and students' reported sleep with the same measures from the previous semester. This evidence would address families who want better rest but also taxpayers who worry about spending. A trial has limits: one semester may include unusual weather or sports schedules, and surveys measure what students report rather than every hour they sleep. Even so, the test would give the board local evidence, rather than relying only on a national recommendation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is the writer's main claim? Give one piece of evidence used to support it.

2 What strength and what limitation does the passage give for the later-start claim?

3 State the counterclaim and explain why the passage treats it as a reasonable concern.

4 How does the proposed one-semester trial respond to two different audience concerns? Include one limit of the trial.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a school policy issue other than start times. Write exactly four sentences: state a claim with evidence, explain that claim's strength and limitation, state a counterclaim with evidence and an audience concern, then explain the counterclaim's strength and limitation.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the main claim and the counterclaim. Circle evidence for each, then write S beside each strength and L beside each limitation you find. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the writer's main claim? Give one piece of evidence used to support it.	Riverton High should start at 8:30 a.m. One supporting piece of evidence is that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 8:30 or later for middle and high schools.
2	What strength and what limitation does the passage give for the later-start claim?	A strength is that a later start could support alertness, learning, and safety. A limitation is that some students may not sleep longer because of jobs, screens, or early responsibilities.
3	State the counterclaim and explain why the passage treats it as a reasonable concern.	The counterclaim is that the school should keep its 8:00 a.m. start. It is reasonable because a schedule change could affect shared bus routes, elementary students, costs, and after-school activities.
4	How does the proposed one-semester trial respond to two different audience concerns? Include one limit of the trial.	The trial would provide information about sleep and attendance for families who want better rest, and bus costs for taxpayers concerned about spending. One limitation is that a single semester could include unusual weather or sports schedules.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our school should add covered bike racks near the main entrance because a one-week count found 22 bicycles locked to fences or railings during rainy weather. This claim is strong because it uses local evidence of need, but the count does not show how many students would bike throughout the year. Some families may oppose the project because the facilities manager estimates that installation would cost \$2,400, a concern for taxpayers who want funds reserved for classrooms. That counterclaim correctly identifies a cost, yet it cannot show whether the racks' long-term use would justify the expense without more data.

Accept equivalent evidence-based explanations that distinguish a claim from a counterclaim and identify genuine strengths or limitations. For Part 3, look for fair treatment of both positions, evidence for each, and attention to a specific audience concern.