The Bell Time Case

Evaluate claims, evidence, and limits in an informational argument.

ELA.11.R.2 "Reading Informational Text"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the author's main claim, number each piece of evidence that supports it, and circle sentences that limit a conclusion or acknowledge a concern. These marks will help you judge whether the reasoning and evidence are strong enough.

Should High Schools Start Later?

(1) Many U.S. high schools should begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m. Adolescents experience a biological shift during puberty that makes it harder to fall asleep early, so an early bell can conflict with their sleep needs. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later to help students obtain sufficient sleep. A later schedule will not solve every cause of fatigue, but it can remove one school-controlled barrier. District leaders should therefore treat later start times as a health and learning policy, not merely a transportation decision.

(2) Evidence from Seattle offers a useful, though limited, case. In 2016, Seattle Public Schools moved high school start times from 7:50 to 8:45 a.m. Researchers studying two schools reported that students slept 34 minutes longer on school nights after the change, and median grades increased by 4.5 percent. These findings support the idea that a later bell may improve sleep and academic performance. However, the study does not prove that the schedule alone caused the grade increase, because other changes in students' lives or schools could also have mattered.

(3) Opponents reasonably note that later starts can disrupt bus routes, athletics, after-school jobs, and family schedules. Those concerns matter, yet they do not overturn the health argument by themselves. Before adopting a permanent change, a district could run a one-year pilot and track attendance, sleep surveys, course grades, bus costs, and participation in activities. Comparing results with those from a similar school that keeps its current schedule would produce stronger evidence than relying on one city's experience. Such local data would help leaders decide whether benefits justify the trade-offs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the author's main claim? Give two pieces of evidence or reasoning the author uses to support it.

2. Why is the Seattle study relevant to the author's argument? Why does the author describe it as limited?

3. Is this conclusion valid based on the passage: "Seattle grades increased, so later start times always raise grades"? Explain your judgment.

4. What step does the author propose to gather stronger evidence than one city's experience, and why would it strengthen the decision?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences, 70 to 95 words, evaluating the author's recommendation to treat later start times as a health and learning policy. State your judgment, use two different details from the passage, and explain one specific piece of local evidence that would strengthen your judgment.

ANSWER KEY

The Bell Time Case

GRADE 11 · ELA.11.R.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the author's main claim, number each piece of evidence that supports it, and circle sentences that limit a conclusion or acknowledge a concern. These marks will help you judge whether the reasoning and evidence are strong enough. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the author's main claim? Give two pieces of evidence or reasoning the author uses to support it.	**The author claims that high schools should start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. Support includes adolescents' later biological sleep shift, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation, and the Seattle study results.**
2	Why is the Seattle study relevant to the author's argument? Why does the author describe it as limited?	**It is relevant because students slept longer and median grades increased after the later start time. It is limited because it involved two schools and cannot prove that the schedule alone caused the grade increase.**
3	Is this conclusion valid based on the passage: "Seattle grades increased, so later start times always raise grades"? Explain your judgment.	**No. One limited study cannot support the word "always," and the passage states that other changes could have affected grades.**
4	What step does the author propose to gather stronger evidence than one city's experience, and why would it strengthen the decision?	**The author proposes a one-year local pilot that tracks several outcomes and compares results with a similar school that keeps its schedule. This would provide local comparison data about both benefits and trade-offs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The recommendation is convincing as a reason to investigate later start times, but not as proof that every district should adopt them. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation supports the health concern because it connects start times to adolescent sleep needs. Seattle's longer sleep results add useful evidence, although its grade increase could have had other causes. A local pilot comparing attendance, sleep, transportation costs, and grades with a similar school would show whether the benefits outweigh disruptions in that district.

Accept reasoned judgments that accurately use two passage details and explain how a specific local measure or comparison would strengthen the evidence. Students may judge the argument convincing, partly convincing, or insufficient if their evaluation addresses relevance, sufficiency, or limitations of the evidence.