

Bell Time Debate

Trace how evidence and reasoning build an argument.

ELA.8.R.2.4 "Track the development of an argument, analyzing the types of reasoning used and their effectiveness and identifying ways in which the argument could be improved."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the main claim and each reason, circle evidence that supports a reason, and number the kinds of reasoning you find, such as expert evidence, cause-and-effect thinking, statistics, or a response to a concern. These marks will help you judge how well the argument works.

A Later First Bell

- ① Riverton Middle School should move its first bell from 7:30 to 8:15 next year. The change would give students more time to sleep before classes begin. The American Academy of Pediatrics has said that middle and high schools should aim for start times of 8:30 a.m. or later because teenagers need adequate sleep. Riverton's 7:30 schedule asks many students to wake before 6:00 to catch buses. A later bell would better match students' sleep needs and could help them arrive ready to learn.
- ② Sleep research supplies a reason for this proposal. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that insufficient sleep among adolescents is associated with problems in attention, behavior, and academic performance. If students sleep longer because they do not have to rise as early, they may be more alert during first period. Riverton could also benefit from fewer late arrivals. Last semester, the attendance office recorded 184 first-period tardies, a number that suggests the current morning schedule is difficult for some students. These facts connect a later start to a school problem.
- ③ Some families may worry that a later dismissal would interfere with sports, jobs, or child care. That concern deserves attention, but it does not require keeping the present schedule. The district could survey families, adjust practice times, and study bus routes before making a final decision. Supporters sometimes add that "everyone I know is tired at school." This personal observation makes the issue relatable, yet it is weak evidence because it represents only a small group. A stronger argument would include local sleep and activity data, plus a clear transportation plan.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is the writer's central claim? What type of support does the writer use in paragraph 1?

2 How does the writer use the 184 first-period tardies as evidence? How effective is this statistic?

3 What cause-and-effect reasoning appears in paragraph 2? Why is that reasoning only partly convincing?

4 How does paragraph 3 respond to a counterclaim? Identify one effective move and one improvement the writer says is needed.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences that strengthen the argument for a later first bell. Include one detail from the passage, address one family concern with a concrete plan, and identify additional evidence the district should collect.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the main claim and each reason, circle evidence that supports a reason, and number the kinds of reasoning you find, such as expert evidence, cause-and-effect thinking, statistics, or a response to a concern. These marks will help you judge how well the argument works. 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? What type of support does the writer use in paragraph 1?	The writer claims that Riverton should move its first bell from 7:30 to 8:15. Paragraph 1 uses expert evidence from the American Academy of Pediatrics and reasoning about students' sleep needs.
2	How does the writer use the 184 first-period tardies as evidence? How effective is this statistic?	The statistic suggests that the current early schedule is difficult for some students. It is useful local evidence, but it does not prove that a later start will reduce tardies.
3	What cause-and-effect reasoning appears in paragraph 2? Why is that reasoning only partly convincing?	The writer reasons that a later bell could let students sleep longer, making them more alert in first period. It is only partly convincing because the cited research and tardy total do not directly prove that changing Riverton's bell time will cause those results.
4	How does paragraph 3 respond to a counterclaim? Identify one effective move and one improvement the writer says is needed.	The paragraph recognizes concerns about sports, jobs, and child care, then proposes surveying families, adjusting practice times, and studying bus routes. It says the argument needs local sleep and activity data and a clear transportation plan.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Riverton should move its first bell to 8:15 because its 184 first-period tardies show that the current morning schedule creates a problem. Although families may worry about late practices or child care, the district should survey them and use the results to revise bus and activity schedules. It should also collect local sleep data before and after a pilot so it can judge whether students become more alert and arrive on time.

Accept equivalent descriptions of the claim, evidence, reasoning, and limitations when students support their answers with passage details. For Part 3, accept varied plans if the response has exactly three sentences and includes passage evidence, a response to a concern, and a need for further evidence.