The Library Debate

Test the evidence behind a school proposal

RI.11-12.8 "Evaluate the argument, specific claims and evidence in a text, assessing the validity, reasoning, relevance and sufficiency; analyze false statements and fallacious reasoning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the council's central claim, circle two pieces of evidence offered for it, and number two places where the reasoning goes beyond the evidence.

Should the Library Stay Open Later?

1. At Cedar Ridge High, the library closes at 3:30 p.m., and most buses leave at 3:20. A student council proposal would keep the library open until 5:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Supporters argue that two later afternoons would give students with activities or limited study space at home a quiet place to work. To test demand, council members counted students still using the library at 3:25 on four Tuesdays. They recorded 18, 21, 17, and 20 students. Those counts show some students use the space near closing time, but they cannot show how many would stay until 5:00.

2. The council also asked 40 students who were leaving the library between 3:00 and 3:30 whether they would use later hours. Thirty-two said yes. In its memo, the council writes, "Eighty percent of Cedar Ridge students want the library open later." The calculation describes the 40 students surveyed, not the whole school: the council did not ask students who never visit the library. The memo adds, "Anyone who disagrees thinks students should study in noisy hallways." That charge ignores other possible concerns, including staffing costs and transportation. A stronger case would report those costs and ask students across the school.

3. The principal has estimated that paying a staff member for the added hours would cost $180 each week. The council calls that price reasonable because, it says, "One improved test score would pay for the program." Test scores do not pay the school's bills, and the memo offers no evidence that later hours raise scores. Still, the counts and survey give a reason to try a limited pilot. The principal could track attendance during a four-week trial and compare it with staffing costs before deciding whether to continue. That approach tests the proposal without treating an interested sample as the voice of every student.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What do the four Tuesday counts support, and what can they not establish about the proposal?

2. Is the memo's claim that 80 percent of Cedar Ridge students want later hours justified by its survey? Explain.

3. What is wrong with the memo's claim about anyone who disagrees? Give one concern the claim overlooks.

4. Why does the claim about one improved test score fail to justify the weekly cost?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In three sentences, recommend whether Cedar Ridge should test later library hours and under what conditions. Cite one detail from the passage, address a cost or access concern, and name evidence that would change your recommendation.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · RI.11-12.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the council's central claim, circle two pieces of evidence offered for it, and number two places where the reasoning goes beyond the evidence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What do the four Tuesday counts support, and what can they not establish about the proposal?	**They show that 17 to 21 students used the library near closing on those Tuesdays. They do not show how many would stay until 5:00.**
2	Is the memo's claim that 80 percent of Cedar Ridge students want later hours justified by its survey? Explain.	**No. Thirty-two of the 40 surveyed library users said yes, but the council did not survey students who never visit the library.**
3	What is wrong with the memo's claim about anyone who disagrees? Give one concern the claim overlooks.	**It misrepresents disagreement as opposition to quiet study space. Someone might instead be concerned about staffing costs or transportation.**
4	Why does the claim about one improved test score fail to justify the weekly cost?	**A test score cannot pay a bill, and the memo provides no evidence that later hours would improve scores.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would test a 4:15 closing on Tuesdays for four weeks because 17 to 21 students were still in the library near closing on the counted Tuesdays. Before approving the trial, the principal should check its staffing cost and whether students can get home after the 3:20 buses. If fewer than ten students use the extra time each week, I would not support continuing it.

Accept other defensible recommendations that use passage evidence accurately, address a real concern, and specify evidence that could change the student's judgment. Do not require students to favor a trial.