The Bell Debate

Weigh evidence for a claim and a counterclaim

W.11-12.1.b "Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the main claim and circle the counterclaim. Number the evidence for each side, then put a star beside a sentence that points out a limitation.

Should High School Start Later?

1. An 8:30 a.m. high school start is worth considering because a bell schedule can either support or fight adolescent sleep. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later. During adolescence, the body's sleep timing shifts later, even as students still need eight to ten hours of sleep per day. An earlier start can force students to wake before they have slept enough. Moving the bell would not make anyone put down a phone at night, but it would remove one school-created barrier to adequate sleep.

2. The strongest objection is not that teenagers should simply go to bed earlier. It is that the change can disrupt transportation and family routines. Consider a district that uses the same buses for high school and elementary routes. If the high school bell moves later, routes may overlap, requiring a redesigned schedule or more buses and drivers. A later dismissal may also leave less time for a student to work or collect a younger sibling. These are practical costs, not excuses. The bus example shows why a new start time cannot be judged by sleep benefits alone.

3. Still, transportation problems vary by district, while the sleep recommendation applies broadly to adolescents. Before changing the bell, a district should map its bus runs and ask families which after-school duties would become harder. It could then compare an 8:30 start with other options, such as adjusting elementary routes or activity times. Those options might cost money or fail to solve every conflict, so the district should publish the trade-offs rather than promise an easy fix. If the plan protects access to transportation and after-school commitments, the case for a later start is stronger.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the writer's main claim? Identify two pieces of evidence that develop it.

2. State the counterclaim fairly. What two specific problems does the passage use to support it?

3. Identify one limitation of the argument for later starts and one limitation of the transportation objection.

4. Which proposed step would provide the most relevant local evidence about the bus objection? Explain why.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph arguing whether a school should reserve one lunch period each week for optional club meetings. Develop your claim and a fair counterclaim with one concrete, plausible example for each, then explain a limitation of at least one side.

ANSWER KEY

The Bell Debate

HIGH SCHOOL · W.11-12.1.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the main claim and circle the counterclaim. Number the evidence for each side, then put a star beside a sentence that points out a limitation. 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? Identify two pieces of evidence that develop it.	**The writer argues that an 8:30 a.m. high school start is worth considering. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends an 8:30 a.m. or later start, and adolescent sleep timing shifts later even though teens need eight to ten hours of sleep.**
2	State the counterclaim fairly. What two specific problems does the passage use to support it?	**A later start could disrupt transportation and family routines. Shared bus routes might overlap, and later dismissal could reduce time for work or picking up a younger sibling.**
3	Identify one limitation of the argument for later starts and one limitation of the transportation objection.	**A later start cannot ensure students go to bed earlier. Transportation problems vary by district, so a bus conflict in one district does not establish the same conflict everywhere.**
4	Which proposed step would provide the most relevant local evidence about the bus objection? Explain why.	**Mapping the district's bus runs would show whether moving the high school bell would cause routes to overlap.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Schools should make one lunch period each week available for optional club meetings, especially for students who cannot stay after dismissal because they ride the bus. If a club meets only after school, a bus rider may have no way to attend. However, lunch is also a chance to eat and take a break. A student whose only free period is lunch might have to choose between a club and needed downtime. Brief, optional meetings would improve access, though they would not solve every scheduling conflict.

Accept either position in Part 3 if the student develops both sides with relevant, plausible examples and identifies a genuine limitation. Treat the bus situation in the passage as a hypothetical example, not a claim about every district.