Rebates and Results

Weigh evidence about a government policy

USH.P.2 "Use interdisciplinary tools to acquire, apply, and evaluate content understanding of the four strands of social studies. Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of government, the benefits of democratic systems..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the program's two goals, circle one limit of the data, and number the supporters' and critics' claims 1 and 2. Use your marks to compare what the evidence does and does not show.

What Did Cash for Clunkers Change?

1 In 2009, during a severe recession, Congress funded the Car Allowance Rebate System, nicknamed Cash for Clunkers. Drivers could trade in certain older, less fuel-efficient vehicles for a credit of $3,500 or $4,500 toward a new vehicle that met fuel-economy rules. Lawmakers hoped to support car sales and reduce fuel use at the same time.

2 The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported the average fuel economy of vehicles traded in and vehicles purchased through the program. The table summarizes those averages in miles per gallon, or mpg. A higher mpg means a vehicle travels farther on one gallon of fuel, but these averages alone cannot show how much gasoline participants actually saved.

AVERAGE FUEL ECONOMY OF VEHICLES IN THE 2009 PROGRAM

Vehicle group	Average miles per gallon
Traded-in vehicles	15.8
Purchased vehicles	24.9

3 Supporters could cite higher mpg as evidence of more efficient purchases. Critics could argue that some buyers would have bought new cars anyway, limiting added sales. The table cannot show total fuel saved or emissions reduced: drivers travel different distances, and making new vehicles creates emissions. Neither interpretation alone measures the program's full impact.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the table support one of the lawmakers' goals?

2. Why can't the mpg averages show whether the program met its car-sales goal?

3. What is the critics' concern about added sales? What comparison would help test it?

4. Why doesn't the higher mpg prove that the program reduced total emissions?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a recommendation to a lawmaker considering a similar rebate today. Use both mpg averages, weigh a possible economic benefit against a cost or limit, and identify one more piece of evidence you would seek before deciding.

Rebates and Results

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the program's two goals, circle one limit of the data, and number the supporters' and critics' claims 1 and 2. Use your marks to compare what the evidence does and does not show. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the table support one of the lawmakers' goals?	**Purchased vehicles averaged 24.9 mpg, compared with 15.8 mpg for traded-in vehicles. This supports the goal of encouraging more fuel-efficient vehicles.**
2	Why can't the mpg averages show whether the program met its car-sales goal?	**They compare vehicle efficiency, not how many additional sales the rebates caused.**
3	What is the critics' concern about added sales? What comparison would help test it?	**Some buyers might have bought new cars without a rebate. Comparing sales with the program to estimated sales without it would help test that concern.**
4	Why doesn't the higher mpg prove that the program reduced total emissions?	**Drivers travel different distances, and producing new vehicles creates emissions. The table does not measure either effect.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would not approve a similar rebate without more evidence. In the 2009 program, purchased vehicles averaged 24.9 mpg, while traded-in vehicles averaged 15.8 mpg, so a rebate could encourage more efficient purchases. It might also support car sales during a recession. However, public money could go to people who would buy a car anyway. I would seek an estimate of how many sales the rebate added, rather than counting every purchase made through the program as an added sale.

Accept reasonable recommendations for or against a rebate if they use both table values, address an economic trade-off, and request evidence that could inform the decision. Students should not treat higher mpg alone as proof of lower total fuel use or emissions.