

Start Time Tradeoffs

A model of fair argument for a school decision.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1b "Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Riverton and its local estimates are fictional; the AAP recommendation is real. Underline the proposal's claim and counterclaim. Circle evidence for each side, then mark S or L beside each stated strength or limitation. Notice whose concerns each side addresses.

The Later Bell Proposal

- ① Fictional Riverton High is considering an 8:45 a.m. start instead of 7:35. Supporters argue that a later schedule fits adolescent sleep patterns. In its 2014 policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that most middle and high schools aim to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m., while considering commuting times and local constraints. This research-based guidance supports taking later starts seriously. It does not predict Riverton's attendance, grades or individual sleep outcomes; local benefits still need evaluation.
- ② Opponents note that a later bell may disrupt family routines. Riverton's transportation office estimates that shifting high school buses could require three additional drivers or altered routes. That estimate directly addresses taxpayers and caregivers who worry about costs and child care. Still, it is a projection, not a final contract, and the board could compare route changes before deciding. Students with after-school jobs may also reasonably fear that a later dismissal would shorten their work hours.

- ③ A fair recommendation should weigh both sides rather than treat one inconvenience as unimportant. The board could approve a one-year pilot and publish attendance, first-period grades, transportation costs, and student sleep survey results. Families who depend on early drop-off need advance notice, while students who struggle to stay awake deserve a meaningful test of the change. Some residents may value budgets over sleep benefits; others may assume any later start solves exhaustion. Reporting several measures would test those assumptions and show whether benefits justify trade-offs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- ① What evidence supports considering a later start, and what is its main limitation for Riverton?

- ② What counterclaim does the transportation estimate support, and what limitation does the writer identify?

- ③ How does the writer address the concern of students with after-school jobs?

- ④ What assumptions might residents bring to the decision, and how would reporting several measures respond to them?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 180-220-word argument to Riverton's school board for or against the proposed one-year later-start pilot. Develop your claim and the strongest counterclaim fairly. Use relevant passage evidence for each; explain a strength and limitation of each side's evidence. Address the board's and families' likely concerns, values or assumptions, then justify your conclusion.

Develop both sides before deciding

Write several connected paragraphs for a board that must consider students, families and costs. Explain what the AAP guidance supports and cannot predict. Weigh the transportation estimate's local relevance and uncertainty. Treat opposing concerns as reasonable, and explain why your conclusion follows. Use only the supplied facts and clearly identify proposed actions. Keep the complete argument within 180-220 words.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Riverton and its local estimates are fictional; the AAP recommendation is real. Underline the proposal's claim and counterclaim. Circle evidence for each side, then mark S or L beside each stated strength or limitation. Notice whose concerns each side addresses. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What evidence supports considering a later start, and what is its main limitation for Riverton?	The AAP's research-based recommendation supports considering later starts for adolescent sleep. It does not predict specific local outcomes; Riverton still needs to evaluate its own results.
2	What counterclaim does the transportation estimate support, and what limitation does the writer identify?	It supports the concern that a later start could raise transportation costs or disrupt routes. It is only a projection, not a final contract.
3	How does the writer address the concern of students with after-school jobs?	The writer acknowledges that later dismissal could shorten their work hours, treating that concern as reasonable.
4	What assumptions might residents bring to the decision, and how would reporting several measures respond to them?	Some may prioritize budgets over sleep, while others may assume a later start solves exhaustion. Attendance, grades, costs, and sleep results would test both assumptions.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Board argument: Riverton should approve a one-year later-start pilot after publishing a workable transportation plan. The AAP recommendation offers research-based support for aligning school schedules with adolescent sleep. Its strength is its broader evidence base; its limitation is that it cannot predict this school's outcomes. Students who struggle in early classes deserve a local evaluation, not a promise that later bells will solve every problem.

Opponents fairly emphasize cost and family schedules. The transportation office projects three additional drivers or altered routes. That estimate is useful because it concerns Riverton's own system, but it is a projection rather than a final contract. The board should compare routing options before assuming either an unavoidable expense or a cost-free change. Families needing early drop-off and students with jobs have practical reasons to question the proposal.

A pilot can address these competing concerns if its evaluation is public. Publish transportation costs, attendance, first-period grades and sleep survey results, with family feedback. Compare outcomes with earlier records while acknowledging that other changes may affect them. Residents who prioritize budgets should see costs clearly; those expecting universal sleep benefits should see limits. A monitored trial offers a stronger basis for a lasting decision than either assumption alone.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Accept a supported argument for or against the pilot. Require relevant evidence for both positions, an explicit strength and limitation for each, fair counterclaim development, and attention to audience knowledge, concerns, values or possible biases. The model distinguishes research-based guidance from local predictions and a planning estimate from a settled cost. Riverton and all local records are fictional. AAP background: School Start Times for Adolescents (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2014-1697>. This focused exercise does not establish effects of a real district policy.