

Before First Bell

Analyze how a model proposal weighs evidence and practical concerns.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.1b "Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Cited health guidance and Seattle research are real; local proposals and any pilot figures are fictional classroom examples. Underline the main claim once and the counterclaim twice, circle each piece of data or evidence, write S or L beside each stated strength or limitation, and star the audience concern and response.

A Later Start Proposal

- ① Our district should move high school's first bell from 7:35 to 8:30 next year. This change would give many teenagers more time to sleep, which matters because the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools begin at 8:30 a.m. or later. A 2018 study compared different groups of biology students at two Seattle high schools before and after a 55-minute start-time delay in 2016. Median sleep on school nights was 34 minutes longer after the change. Median biology grades were 77.5 percent before and 82 percent afterward, a difference of 4.5 percentage points. These results offer concrete support for a later schedule. Still, the study examined one city, so its results cannot guarantee that our students' grades would rise by the same amount.
- ② Some families and transportation staff oppose a later bell because it could disrupt bus routes, child care, and after-school jobs. Their concern has a real strength: buses often serve several schools on staggered schedules, so changing one start time can affect many households. A district transportation review could calculate the added cost before any vote. However, this counterclaim has a limitation. It shows that scheduling is difficult, not that an earlier bell improves learning or health. The board should compare projected bus costs with student sleep data rather than treating inconvenience as proof that the current schedule is best.

- ③ Board members may worry that later dismissal would reduce practice time for athletes or leave students waiting for rides. To address those concerns, the district could test the change at one high school for a semester, publish bus-arrival and activity schedules, and survey students, families, coaches, and employees. The trial would not settle every question, since one semester may not reveal long-term costs or effects on grades. Yet it would give local evidence before a districtwide decision. A later start deserves support because the health evidence is strong, while the practical concerns deserve a measured, public test.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 What is the writer's main claim? Give two pieces of evidence used to support it.

- 2 What counterclaim does the writer present, and what makes that counterclaim a reasonable concern?

- 3 Identify one limitation of the evidence for the main claim and one limitation of the counterclaim.

- 4 Which audience concerns does the third paragraph anticipate? What plan does the writer offer in response?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 120-150 word recommendation to the principal on whether to add a 15-minute daily independent-reading period. Use these fictional pilot results: during six weeks, 72 percent of participating students finished assigned reading, compared with 58 percent before the pilot; teachers lost 15 minutes of class instruction each day. State a claim and counterclaim, give each evidence, name one strength and one limitation, and address a concern of students, families, or teachers.

Develop your response

Write 120-150 words. Use the task's required evidence and explain your reasoning. Review your claim, supporting details and response to a concern before finishing.

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

Cited health guidance and Seattle research are real; local proposals and any pilot figures are fictional classroom examples. Underline the main claim once and the counterclaim twice, circle each piece of data or evidence, write S or L beside each stated strength or limitation, and star the audience concern and response. 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? Give two pieces of evidence used to support it.	The district should move the first bell from 7:35 to 8:30. Supporting evidence includes the AAP recommendation for starts at 8:30 or later and the Seattle study: median school-night sleep was 34 minutes longer and median biology grades were 4.5 percentage points higher after the change.
2	What counterclaim does the writer present, and what makes that counterclaim a reasonable concern?	The counterclaim is that a later bell could disrupt bus routes, child care, and after-school jobs. It is reasonable because buses often serve several schools on staggered schedules, so one schedule change can affect many households.
3	Identify one limitation of the evidence for the main claim and one limitation of the counterclaim.	The Seattle study examined only one city, so it cannot guarantee the same grade results locally. The counterclaim shows that scheduling is difficult, but it does not show that an earlier bell improves learning or health.
4	Which audience concerns does the third paragraph anticipate? What plan does the writer offer in response?	It anticipates concerns about reduced athletic practice time and students waiting for rides. The writer proposes a one-semester trial at one high school, public bus and activity schedules, and surveys of students, families, coaches, and employees.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend adding the 15-minute reading period for one semester. In the six-week pilot, 72 percent of participating students finished assigned reading, compared with 58 percent before the pilot. This 14-percentage-point increase is a strength because it directly measures a reading outcome the school wants to improve. Teachers reasonably counter that every daily reading period removes 15 minutes of instructional time, which could make pacing harder in courses with extensive content. That concern is strong because teachers must cover required material. However, the pilot lasted only six weeks and involved participating students, so it cannot show whether the result will last or represent every class. To address teachers' concern, the principal could allow departments to plan the reading time together and review completion data after one semester.

Accept equivalent wording when students accurately identify the claim, counterclaim, evidence, strengths, limitations, and audience concerns. For the open response, look for a fair treatment of both positions, specific use of both pilot findings, and a realistic response to an audience concern. Seattle findings compare separate cohorts, not individual gains: median school-night sleep differed by 34 minutes and median biology grades by 4.5 percentage points. The observational study does not establish that the schedule alone caused the grade difference. Local proposals and pilot examples are fictional; students should evaluate their reasoning. Sources: AAP (2014), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25156998/> ; Dunster et al. (2018), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30547089/> .