

The Bell Debate

Analyze a model recommendation that weighs evidence and tradeoffs.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1b "Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form that..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Local people, proposals, records and observations are fictional classroom examples; named research and health guidance are real. Underline the claim and counterclaim, circle evidence for either position, and write S or L beside each stated strength or limitation.

Should High Schools Start Later?

- ① Our district should move high school start times to 8:30 a.m. or later. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools begin at 8:30 or later because adolescent sleep cycles shift later during puberty. This recommendation is especially relevant to school board members who want students alert enough to learn and families concerned about teen health. Later starts could reduce the mismatch between teenagers' biological clocks and early bells. However, a medical recommendation does not prove that every district can change schedules easily or that sleep will increase for every student.
- ② 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. This local evidence gives the claim concrete results, rather than relying only on expert advice. Still, the study cannot show with certainty that the schedule alone caused the grade change, since teachers, courses, and student routines may also have differed. Its findings may not transfer unchanged to rural districts with longer bus routes.

- ③ Opponents reasonably note that later high school starts can disrupt transportation and after-school life. Districts that use the same buses for several school tiers may need more buses or redesigned routes, which can cost money. Coaches, employers, and families may also worry that practices, jobs, and child-care schedules would end later. These concerns matter to taxpayers and working caregivers, not merely to administrators. Yet they are not automatic reasons to keep an early bell. A board could compare route costs, survey families, and consider moving elementary schedules instead. It should report who would bear each inconvenience before choosing a plan.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- ① What is the author's main claim, and what health-related reason supports it?

- ② What schedule change occurred in the Seattle study, and what two results did the study report?

- ③ Identify one limitation of the Seattle study's evidence. Why does that limitation matter when using the study to support the claim?

- ④ Which audiences does the author say should be considered when evaluating the counterclaim, and what concerns might they have?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a proposed change at your school. In 90 to 120 words, write a recommendation to a decision-maker that states a claim, develops a counterclaim fairly, uses at least one relevant fact or observation, identifies one strength and one limitation in the reasoning, and addresses a concern the audience may have.

Develop your response

Write 90-120 words. Support both the claim and counterclaim with relevant facts or observations. Explain strengths and limitations while addressing your audience's concerns.

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

Local people, proposals, records and observations are fictional classroom examples; named research and health guidance are real. Underline the claim and counterclaim, circle evidence for either position, and write S or L beside each stated strength or limitation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the author's main claim, and what health-related reason supports it?	The district should start high school at 8:30 a.m. or later. Adolescent sleep cycles shift later during puberty, so later starts may better match teens' biological clocks.
2	What schedule change occurred in the Seattle study, and what two results did the study report?	The schools delayed their bell by 55 minutes. Median school-night sleep was 34 minutes longer afterward, and median biology grades were 4.5 percentage points higher (77.5 to 82 percent). These are comparisons of different student groups, not guaranteed individual gains.
3	Identify one limitation of the Seattle study's evidence. Why does that limitation matter when using the study to support the claim?	The study cannot prove that the new schedule alone caused the grade change because other factors may have differed. Its results also may not apply unchanged to districts with different conditions, such as rural bus routes.
4	Which audiences does the author say should be considered when evaluating the counterclaim, and what concerns might they have?	Taxpayers and working caregivers should be considered. They may be concerned about the cost of buses or redesigned routes and about later practices, jobs, or child-care schedules.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our school should create a quiet library study room during lunch. A two-week sign-in count found that 46 students sought a quiet workspace. This evidence is useful because it records requests, but the short sample may miss other students. Some students prefer the library's social space; librarians also report that both lunch supervisors already monitor crowded areas. Those observations strengthen the counterclaim about staffing, although they do not show whether another room would need constant supervision. The principal could test an unused conference room with scheduled staff coverage for one month. Reviewing requests and staffing time would address the audience's concern about serving students within the budget.

Accept accurate paraphrases that distinguish the claim from the counterclaim and connect evidence to its strength or limitation. For the open response, look for a fair counterclaim, relevant support for both positions, and attention to the decision-maker's likely concerns. Local people, proposals, records and observations are fictional classroom examples; named research and health guidance are real. Seattle compared separate cohorts, not individual gains, and did not establish sole causation. The paper's Results explicitly labels the grade values as medians: 77.5% before, 82% afterward, a difference of 4.5 percentage points. Sources: AAP (2014), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25156998/> ; Dunster et al. (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau6200> .