

Bell Time Persuasion

Analyze how rhetorical choices shape a public argument.

12.P.AC.1.a "Identify, apply, and analyze the literary, expository, and opinion (grades K-5) or rhetorical (grades 6-12) elements in texts, explaining or evaluating how specific elements affect the target audience and support the text's purpose. (I/C)"

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 central claim and each piece of evidence, circle each rhetorical question and direct address, and number the concession and final call to action. Use your marks to track how the writer persuades the school community and school board.

A Better First Bell

- ① At 6:20 each morning, buses pull away while many high school students are still fighting biology, not laziness. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that middle and high schools begin at 8:30 a.m. or later, noting teenagers' natural sleep cycles shift later during puberty. Yet our district's first bell rings at 7:25. If we expect alert discussion, safe driving, and serious learning, why do we schedule school before many students can reasonably be rested? The school board should move the high school start time to 8:30 next fall.
- ② Evidence from districts that changed their schedules suggests that this is more than a comfort issue. 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. First-period absences and tardiness improved at one of the two schools, not both. These results do not promise that a later bell will solve every academic problem or prove that the schedule alone caused the differences. They do show that time is a resource: a schedule can either protect students' sleep or quietly take it away before first period begins.

- ③ Changing the schedule would require adjustments. Athletics, family transportation, and elementary bus routes deserve careful planning, and the district should publish that plan before voting. But inconvenience is not the same as impossibility. Our community already revises calendars, routes, and budgets when students' needs demand it. Board members, families, and students should ask one question at the next public meeting: Does a 7:25 bell serve the people expected to learn? Approve an 8:30 start time, then measure attendance, sleep, and course performance during the first year.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 What is the writer's central claim, and which audience is most directly asked to act?

- 2 How does the opening contrast between "biology" and "laziness" affect the argument's audience?

- 3 How do the Seattle study details support the writer's purpose, and why does the writer add that a later bell will not solve every academic problem?

- 4 How do the rhetorical question and the final command work together in the last paragraph?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 120 to 150 word public-comment statement advocating one change at your school or in your community for a named audience. Include a clear claim, one specific fact or observed example, a concession, a rhetorical question, and a call to action. Then write one sentence explaining how your rhetorical question is meant to affect that audience.

Public comment and explanation

Use the first 20 lines for your 120-150-word statement. On the last three lines, write your separate explanation sentence. Label it Explanation.

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 central claim and each piece of evidence, circle each rhetorical question and direct address, and number the concession and final call to action. Use your marks to track how the writer persuades the school community and school board. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the writer's central claim, and which audience is most directly asked to act?	The writer argues that the high school should start at 8:30 next fall. The school board is the audience most directly asked to act.
2	How does the opening contrast between "biology" and "laziness" affect the argument's audience?	It frames tired students as responding to adolescent sleep cycles rather than making excuses, which can reduce blame and build support for a later start time.
3	How do the Seattle study details support the writer's purpose, and why does the writer add that a later bell will not solve every academic problem?	The study reports 34 more minutes of median school-night sleep, a 4.5-percentage-point difference in median biology grades, and better first-period attendance at one school only. These concrete associations support investigating a later start. Acknowledging limits makes the argument more credible and avoids implying guaranteed benefits or sole causation.
4	How do the rhetorical question and the final command work together in the last paragraph?	The question invites the community and board to judge whether the current schedule serves learners. The command then directs the board to approve an 8:30 start and evaluate its results.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

To the school board, install covered shade structures beside the east courtyard before next August. At lunch on sunny days last May, students crowded into the narrow shadow of the library wall while empty tables sat in direct sun, a problem anyone can observe during a campus visit. Shade would give students a usable place to eat, read, and wait for rides. The project will cost money and may require adjusting the facilities schedule, but postponing it leaves the courtyard less useful during the hottest parts of the day. Why maintain outdoor tables that students cannot comfortably use? Ask the facilities office for estimates this month, include the project in the next budget update, and report the chosen timeline to students and families.

Explanation: The question invites board members to judge the courtyard's usefulness and makes delay seem unreasonable.

Accept equivalent analyses that connect a specific rhetorical choice to the school board, families, students, or the broader school community and to the purpose of gaining support for a later start. For the open task, accept varied topics when the response includes all required elements and explains the rhetorical question's intended effect. 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> .