

Bell Time Debate

Evaluate evidence and reasoning in a fictional school proposal.

ELA.8.R.2.4 "Track the development of an argument, analyzing the types of reasoning used and their effectiveness and identifying ways in which the argument could be improved."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the main claim and two reasons. Circle one example each of expert evidence, a statistic, and a response to a concern. Label them E, S, and C. Use your marks to judge the argument.

A Later First Bell

- ① Riverton Middle School should move its first bell from 7:30 to 8:15. A later bell could allow more sleep and help students arrive ready to learn. In its 2014 policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended middle and high school start times of 8:30 or later. That supports delaying the bell, although Riverton's proposed time would still fall short of the recommendation.
- ② A 2018 CDC report links insufficient adolescent sleep with attention and behavior problems and poor academic performance. If students sleep longer, they may become more alert in first period. In this fictional school scenario, the attendance office recorded 184 first-period tardies last semester. This suggests a morning attendance problem, but gives neither its causes nor the number of students involved. A later start might help; the count alone cannot prove it would.
- ③ Some families worry about sports, jobs, and child care after a later dismissal. The district could survey families, adjust practices, and study bus routes. Supporters also say, "Everyone I know is tired." That personal observation is relatable but represents a small group. A stronger proposal would compare possible start times, collect local sleep and activity data, and include a transportation plan before predicting results.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 What is the central claim? How well does the expert recommendation in paragraph 1 support the proposed time?

- 2 How does the writer use the 184 first-period tardies as evidence? How effective is this statistic?

- 3 What cause-and-effect reasoning appears in paragraph 2? Why is that reasoning only partly convincing?

- 4 How does paragraph 3 respond to a counterclaim? Identify one effective move and one improvement the writer says is needed.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences that strengthen the argument for a later first bell. Include one detail from the passage, address one family concern with a concrete plan, and identify additional evidence the district should collect.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the main claim and two reasons. Circle one example each of expert evidence, a statistic, and a response to a concern. Label them E, S, and C. Use your marks to judge the argument. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the central claim? How well does the expert recommendation in paragraph 1 support the proposed time?	Move the first bell from 7:30 to 8:15. The expert recommendation supports a later start in general, but specifies 8:30 or later, so it does not fully support 8:15.
2	How does the writer use the 184 first-period tardies as evidence? How effective is this statistic?	The count suggests a morning attendance problem. It does not give the causes, the number of students involved, or a comparison with later start times, so it cannot show that changing the bell would reduce tardies.
3	What cause-and-effect reasoning appears in paragraph 2? Why is that reasoning only partly convincing?	A later start might allow more sleep, which might improve alertness. The cited association and tardy count support investigating the idea but do not show that changing this school's bell will produce those results.
4	How does paragraph 3 respond to a counterclaim? Identify one effective move and one improvement the writer says is needed.	It acknowledges concerns about sports, jobs, and child care and suggests surveying families, adjusting practices, and studying routes. Further improvements include comparing start times, collecting local sleep and activity data, and making a transportation plan.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Riverton should test a later first bell because 184 first-period tardies suggest an attendance problem worth investigating, although they do not show its cause. To address child-care concerns, the district could survey families and arrange supervised after-school care during a pilot. It should compare 8:15 with 8:30 or later and collect local sleep, attendance, and activity data before deciding which schedule works best.

Accept evidence-based evaluations of the claim, reasoning, limitations, and improvements. For the open task, require three sentences with a passage detail, a concrete response to a family concern, and further evidence to collect. Do not treat association or a tardy count as proof of causation. Riverton and its count are fictional. Sources: AAP (2014), doi:10.1542/peds.2014-1697; CDC (2018), www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6703a1.htm.