

Bell Time Debate

Evaluate a policy argument using evidence and its limits.

12.RI.1.C "Analyze the argument and specific claims in texts, examining whether the reasoning is valid, the evidence is relevant, and whether there are any false premises or unsupported claims."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB The local proposal and survey are fictional; the cited AAP guidance and Seattle study are real. Underline the central claim, circle its evidence, and mark unsupported generalizations or predictions.

A Later Bell for High School

- ① Our school board should pilot an 8:30 start instead of 7:35 next year. In a 2014 policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that middle and high schools aim to begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m. In our fictional local survey, 68 percent of respondents reported fewer than eight hours of sleep on school nights. A later start could give students more opportunity to sleep. That supports testing a change, but does not establish that the schedule causes every respondent's short sleep.
- ② A 2018 Seattle study compared different groups of biology students at two high schools before and after a 55-minute start-time delay. Median school-night sleep was 34 minutes longer afterward. Median biology grades were 77.5 percent before and 82 percent afterward, a difference of 4.5 percentage points. Teachers supplied the grades; these were not students' reports of their grades. The study had no control group, so other changes could help explain the grade difference. The local survey also lacks a response rate and information about nonrespondents. The board should collect local attendance and transportation data before predicting results.

- ③ Some opponents argue that because several students arrive early for band, every teenager can function well before 8:00. Others predict that families will have to buy new cars, without explaining why existing arrangements could not change. A supporter promises that later starts will eliminate tardiness. Each statement goes beyond its support: arriving early does not establish alertness, a small group does not represent everyone, and punctuality can also depend on traffic or family duties. A monitored pilot is more defensible than a guaranteed outcome. Sources: AAP (2014), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25156998/> ; Dunster et al. (2018), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30547089/> .

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 State the author's central claim. Explain how one piece of evidence is relevant without treating it as proof of a guaranteed result.
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- 2 What does the Seattle comparison show, and what prevents the grade difference from proving that the later schedule alone caused improvement?
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- 3 Identify the two reasoning problems in the band argument and one unsupported prediction in paragraph 3.
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- 4 Why does the fictional survey's missing response information matter? Name one useful follow-up before treating its 68 percent as schoolwide.
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Write a 90-130-word evaluation of this argument. Judge whether a pilot is justified, discuss one relevant piece of evidence and its limitation, and explain two weaknesses in the opposing or supporting claims.

Judge the evidence and reasoning

Separate the strength of the proposal from the certainty of its predicted effects.

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PART 1 • READ AND MARK

The local proposal and survey are fictional; the cited AAP guidance and Seattle study are real. Underline the central claim, circle its evidence, and mark unsupported generalizations or predictions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	State the author's central claim. Explain how one piece of evidence is relevant without treating it as proof of a guaranteed result.	The author recommends an 8:30 pilot. The AAP recommendation supports taking later starts seriously, but guidance does not predict this school's exact outcome.
2	What does the Seattle comparison show, and what prevents the grade difference from proving that the later schedule alone caused improvement?	Different cohorts had longer median sleep and higher median biology grades after the change. There was no control group, so other influences could contribute; it is not a measured gain for each student.
3	Identify the two reasoning problems in the band argument and one unsupported prediction in paragraph 3.	Early arrival does not prove effective functioning, and a small group cannot establish a claim about all teenagers. The new-car prediction lacks a mechanism; the promise to eliminate tardiness also exceeds the evidence.
4	Why does the fictional survey's missing response information matter? Name one useful follow-up before treating its 68 percent as schoolwide.	Respondents may differ from nonrespondents. Obtain the response rate and compare relevant characteristics, or conduct a more representative survey, before generalizing to the entire school.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The argument supports a monitored pilot more strongly than a guaranteed improvement. The Seattle comparison is relevant because a later schedule was associated with longer median sleep, but different cohorts and no control group limit causal conclusions about grades. The band argument has two weaknesses: early arrival is not evidence of alertness, and a small group cannot establish how every teenager functions. The supporter's promise to eliminate tardiness is also unsupported because traffic and family duties can still delay students. A pilot could collect local evidence before a permanent decision. Its evaluation should include transportation effects as well as attendance, rather than assuming that one benefit settles every concern.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Accept a supported qualified judgment. Sample: 109 words. Grades were teacher-provided biology grades; 4.5 percentage points is not a 4.5 percent relative change. Do not invent additional local observations.