Weigh the Bell

A model argument that tests evidence on both sides

11-12.WHST.1.b "Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying valid and sufficient data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a disciplined- appropriate form and in a manner..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the main claim and counterclaim, circle evidence for each, and write S beside a strength or L beside a limitation of each position.

Should North Ridge Start Later?

1. For this classroom case, North Ridge High School and its local survey are fictional. The school is considering moving its first bell from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. Supporters argue that the change could give teenagers a better chance to sleep enough. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 8 to 10 hours of sleep for teens ages 13 to 18. In a random survey of 240 North Ridge students, 160 reported sleeping fewer than eight hours on school nights. That result shows a substantial need, but a self-reported survey cannot show that changing the bell will actually increase sleep.

2. Opponents argue that a later bell could strain family schedules and the transportation budget. The district estimates that keeping elementary start times unchanged while shifting the high school bell would require an extra bus run costing $48,000 each year. In a separate family survey, 90 of 300 respondents said a later dismissal would interfere with child care or work. These figures identify concrete costs that supporters should not dismiss. Still, the estimate assumes bus routes cannot be redesigned, and the family survey was voluntary. Its respondents may not represent all families, so the number affected remains uncertain.

3. A responsible recommendation is to test an 8:30 start for one semester before making it permanent. The trial respects the sleep concern without treating reported short sleep as proof that the schedule change will fix it. The school could compare student sleep reports before and during the trial, while also recording bus costs and asking families about actual scheduling problems. This plan has a limit: one semester may not capture the costs of a full school year. Still, presenting both the possible health benefit and the measurable burdens gives board members evidence they can weigh against their budget and family needs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the student survey support the case for a later start, and what can it not establish?

2. Which two pieces of evidence support the counterclaim, and which assumption or survey feature limits that evidence?

3. Why would it be unfair to dismiss the counterclaim solely because the family survey was voluntary?

4. How does the proposed trial address concerns on both sides, and what limitation does the writer acknowledge?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

At a fictional school, four events used 1,200 disposable water bottles; installing two refill stations would cost $1,800 from the $2,400 annual event budget. In 85 to 110 words, write a recommendation for the activities director that develops both the claim for refill stations and the counterclaim about cost, uses the figures to support both, and explains one strength and one limitation of each view.

ANSWER KEY

Weigh the Bell

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.WHST.1.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the main claim and counterclaim, circle evidence for each, and write S beside a strength or L beside a limitation of each position. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the student survey support the case for a later start, and what can it not establish?	**Of 240 students surveyed, 160 reported fewer than eight hours of sleep, showing a substantial need. Their reports do not establish that a later start would increase sleep.**
2	Which two pieces of evidence support the counterclaim, and which assumption or survey feature limits that evidence?	**The estimated extra bus run would cost $48,000 yearly, and 90 of 300 family respondents reported a scheduling conflict. Routes might be redesigned, and the voluntary survey may not represent all families.**
3	Why would it be unfair to dismiss the counterclaim solely because the family survey was voluntary?	**The survey still identifies scheduling concerns among 90 respondents, and the separate bus-cost estimate identifies a possible budget burden. The survey's limitation makes the number affected uncertain, not the concerns irrelevant.**
4	How does the proposed trial address concerns on both sides, and what limitation does the writer acknowledge?	**It would compare sleep reports while tracking bus costs and family scheduling problems. A one-semester trial might not capture full-year costs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend installing two refill stations, but the activities director should consider the cost before approving them. Four events used 1,200 disposable bottles, so stations could reduce the need for single-use containers. That figure shows the scale of the problem, although it does not prove students will bring reusable bottles. The counterclaim is strong because $1,800 would use three-quarters of the $2,400 event budget, leaving only $600 for other expenses. Yet the installation cost does not show whether stations would save money in later years. A trial with borrowed stations at one event could test student use before the school commits its budget.

Accept other text-supported explanations of each position's strengths and limitations. For Part 3, look for a fair counterclaim, accurate use of both figures, and a stated limitation of each view.