Lunchroom Logic

Evaluate bias and reasoning in a school policy argument

9-10.RI.6.b "Evaluate a text for bias and/or fallacies."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two claims that make a broad leap, circle words that reveal the writer's attitude, and number the pieces of evidence the writer offers. Use your marks to judge how fairly the passage supports its position.

Put the Phones Away at Lunch

1 At Cedar Ridge High, the principal is considering a rule that would require students to put away their phones during lunch. I support the rule. Last Tuesday, I watched a table of six students sit together without speaking while they scrolled. Lunch should give students time to talk, rest, and meet people outside their usual classes. If phones are allowed, every student will eventually forget how to have a face-to-face conversation. The cafeteria is one of the few places where a student can practice that skill without a grade attached.

2 To find out what students want, I asked the 24 members of the school's debate club to vote at our meeting. Nineteen supported a phone-free lunch. That result proves nearly all Cedar Ridge students favor the rule. Students who disagree say they need their phones to coordinate rides or check in with family. But those students must care more about their screens than about their classmates. They can surely wait until the final bell to send a message. A school that lets phones stay at lunch is choosing distraction over real friendship.

3 The principal should adopt the rule next month, but the plan needs exceptions for urgent family messages and students who use phones for accessibility. Those concerns deserve attention, even if they do not change my position. Teachers could collect feedback after a two-week trial and ask students whether lunch feels more welcoming. If the number of lunchtime conversations rises, the rule is working. If it does not, critics may finally admit that phones have already ruined our ability to connect. We either remove phones from lunch now or accept a cafeteria where no one truly listens.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the writer's observation of six students not support the prediction about every student's ability to talk face-to-face?

2. What is wrong with using the debate club vote to claim that nearly all Cedar Ridge students favor the rule?

3. How does the writer portray students who disagree with the rule, and why might that portrayal be biased?

4. What two choices does the final sentence present? Explain why those choices do not cover every possibility.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four or five sentences to the principal as a student who supports phone-free lunches but thinks this passage is not yet a fair basis for a rule. Correct one flawed claim and propose a specific way to gather stronger evidence before a decision.

ANSWER KEY

Lunchroom Logic

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.RI.6.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two claims that make a broad leap, circle words that reveal the writer's attitude, and number the pieces of evidence the writer offers. Use your marks to judge how fairly the passage supports its position. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the writer's observation of six students not support the prediction about every student's ability to talk face-to-face?	**One table observed on one day cannot show how every student behaves or predict that students will lose the ability to talk face-to-face.**
2	What is wrong with using the debate club vote to claim that nearly all Cedar Ridge students favor the rule?	**Only 24 debate club members voted. Their views may not represent the rest of the school.**
3	How does the writer portray students who disagree with the rule, and why might that portrayal be biased?	**The writer claims they care more about screens than classmates, ignoring their stated reasons of coordinating rides and checking in with family.**
4	What two choices does the final sentence present? Explain why those choices do not cover every possibility.	**It presents removing phones or accepting a cafeteria where no one listens. Students could still listen while phones are allowed, or the school could try a less restrictive rule.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I support phone-free lunches because I would like more chances to talk with classmates. Still, the writer cannot assume that a quiet table means those students cannot connect with others. They may simply have wanted a quiet break that day. Before changing the rule, the school could survey students from every grade and ask when they use phones at lunch and why. The principal could compare those responses with feedback from a short, voluntary phone-free lunch trial.

Accept other well-supported explanations of the passage's bias or flawed reasoning. In Part 3, look for support for the policy alongside a correction of a claim and a specific plan for gathering stronger evidence.