Behind the Speech

Evaluate a speaker's evidence and appeals

9-10.SL.3 "Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, intended audience, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any faulty reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two pieces of evidence, circle two claims that stretch the evidence, and put a star beside one appeal to the board's values.

Keep the Library Open

1. Members of the school board, I am asking you to keep the library open until 5:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays instead of closing it at 3:30. Last month, I watched three students wait outside in the cold while their rides were late. An open library could give students a quiet place to study and a safe place to wait. Some families cannot pick up students right after classes end. If this building belongs to our whole community, its doors should not close just when many students need them most.

2. Our debate club asked 18 members whether they would use later library hours, and 15 said yes. That proves nearly every student wants the change. During a one-day trial last spring, the library recorded 60 after-school visits, compared with 40 visits on a typical Tuesday. Usage doubled as soon as the doors stayed open. I know these numbers do not tell us exactly who visited or how long they stayed, but they show a clear demand. Picture a student finishing an application at a desk instead of on a noisy bus.

3. Some people will say extra hours cost money. I agree that staffing matters, but the board has not yet shared a cost estimate for two afternoons. We should ask for one before voting. Still, if we refuse to extend library hours, we are telling students that a fresh coat of hallway paint matters more than their safety. That is not the message this school should send. Please approve a four-week trial, count visits each day, and ask students outside debate club whether the schedule helps them. Then we can decide what to fund next.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the speaker want the school board to do, and how does the speaker appeal to the board's responsibility to students?

2. Why do the debate club survey results not prove that nearly every student wants later library hours?

3. Does the change from 40 visits to 60 visits support the claim that usage doubled? Explain.

4. What choice does the speaker suggest the board faces when mentioning hallway paint, and why might that reasoning be faulty?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

At the board meeting, another student says, "Eight of ten chess club members want a snack cart, so every student will buy snacks; deny the cart and our school loses its spirit!" In four sentences, evaluate this speaker's viewpoint, audience, evidence, and rhetoric, then propose one way to test the claim more fairly.

Behind the Speech

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two pieces of evidence, circle two claims that stretch the evidence, and put a star beside one appeal to the board's values. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the speaker want the school board to do, and how does the speaker appeal to the board's responsibility to students?	**The speaker wants the board to extend library hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The speaker appeals to the board's responsibility for students' safety and access to a place to study.**
2	Why do the debate club survey results not prove that nearly every student wants later library hours?	**Only 18 debate club members were asked. Their answers may not represent students outside the club.**
3	Does the change from 40 visits to 60 visits support the claim that usage doubled? Explain.	**No. The increase is 20 visits, or 50 percent of 40. Doubling would mean 80 visits.**
4	What choice does the speaker suggest the board faces when mentioning hallway paint, and why might that reasoning be faulty?	**The speaker suggests the board must choose between library hours and valuing hallway paint over student safety. The passage gives no evidence that paint funds could pay for library staffing or that these are the only choices.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The speaker supports a snack cart and wants the school board to approve it. Eight chess club members cannot represent every student, and wanting a cart does not prove anyone will buy snacks. The warning that the school will lose its spirit exaggerates the consequences of denying the cart. A survey of students from different grades and groups asking whether they would buy snacks would provide better evidence.

Accept other well-supported descriptions of the speech's appeals or faulty reasoning. For the open task, look for a clear distinction between what the small survey shows and what the speaker claims.