# Weigh Both Sides

A model memo tests a claim against a fair counterclaim.

**9-10.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 or L beside a strength or limitation of each side.

### A Tray Trial at Riverton High

1. To the principal: Riverton High should consider replacing disposable lunch trays with washable trays, but only after a longer trial. In this model memo, Riverton High is a fictional school. Its cafeteria ran a five-day pilot, serving 120 lunches each day, the same number as in the five school days before the switch. Staff weighed tray-related trash at closing: 12 kilograms during the disposable week and 3 kilograms during the washable week. This comparison supports a narrow claim: washable trays reduced the trash collected in this trial. The counts and weighing method are useful evidence, although one week cannot establish a yearlong pattern.

2. A reasonable counterclaim is that washable trays may strain a kitchen already short on time. During the pilot, staff recorded an average of 30 extra minutes per day for collecting and washing trays. That log gives the concern a concrete basis, and a principal must consider whether those minutes would delay meal service or require paid hours. Yet the log does not show that service actually slowed, and staff might work faster after learning the routine. The trial also did not measure washing water or electricity, so neither side can claim that the change definitely lowers the cafeteria's total environmental impact.

3. The strongest recommendation is therefore a longer test, not an immediate permanent switch or an outright rejection. For four weeks, the cafeteria could record daily lunch counts, tray-related trash, washing time, and water and electricity use. Staff could note any delayed meals, while students could report whether trays run out during lunch. Comparing days with similar lunch counts would help separate a tray effect from a busy-day effect. The earlier trash figures make further testing worthwhile, while the extra work time makes careful planning necessary. A decision based on both measures would address the principal's likely concerns about waste, cost, and reliable service.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What evidence supports the memo's claim about trash, and what limits that evidence?

2. What evidence supports the counterclaim about kitchen work, and what does it not prove?

3. Why would it be unfair for either side to claim that the trial proves the trays' total environmental impact?

4. How would the proposed four-week test help the principal weigh the claim and counterclaim?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A school is considering keeping its library open 30 minutes later. During a two-week trial, an average of 42 students used the extra time each day, staff logged 30 additional paid minutes per day, and no one tracked whether students completed more assignments. Write one 80 to 105 word paragraph to the principal that develops a claim and a fair counterclaim, uses both figures, explains a strength and limitation of the evidence for each, and addresses cost or access.

ANSWER KEY

# Weigh Both Sides

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.WHST.1.b

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

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

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What evidence supports the memo's claim about trash, and what limits that evidence? | **Tray-related trash fell from 12 kilograms in the disposable week to 3 kilograms in the washable week, with the same number of lunches served. The trial lasted only one week, so it cannot establish a yearlong pattern.** |
| 2 | What evidence supports the counterclaim about kitchen work, and what does it not prove? | **Staff logged an average of 30 extra minutes per day collecting and washing trays. The log does not prove that meal service slowed or that paid hours increased.** |
| 3 | Why would it be unfair for either side to claim that the trial proves the trays' total environmental impact? | **The trial measured tray-related trash but did not measure the water or electricity used to wash the trays.** |
| 4 | How would the proposed four-week test help the principal weigh the claim and counterclaim? | **It would track trash alongside washing time, utility use, and service problems. Comparing days with similar lunch counts would make the results more useful for judging waste, cost, and reliable service.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Principal, keep the library open 30 minutes later for another month before making the change permanent. During a two-week trial, an average of 42 students used the extra time each day, a concrete sign of demand. However, the trial did not show whether they completed more assignments. A fair counterclaim is that the added access may not justify its staffing expense. Staff logged 30 additional paid minutes per day, which establishes added work but not its total cost. Track attendance, completed assignments, and staffing costs for another month before deciding whether the benefits justify the expense.

Accept other defensible claims if students use both figures accurately and explain what each does and does not establish. The trial provides no evidence that assignments were completed or that the added staffing cost is too high.