

The Bell Debate

Analyze how a model argument builds a clear, evidence-based case.

10.W “The student will write in a variety of forms for diverse audiences and purposes linked to grade ten content and texts with an emphasis on argumentative writing...”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the thesis, circle each reference to an authoritative source, and bracket the counterclaim with its refutation. These marks will help you trace how the writer builds and defends an argument.

A Later First Bell

- ① At 7:20 a.m., many high school students are on buses or in first period, even though their bodies may still be primed for sleep. Our district should move high school start times to 8:30 a.m. or later. This change would improve learning, protect student health, and make the school day safer. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later, citing adolescents’ biological sleep rhythms. A later bell would not solve every problem students face, but it would align the schedule more closely with what sleep research shows.
- ② First, extra morning sleep can strengthen students’ ability to learn. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that insufficient sleep among high school students is associated with poorer academic performance and mental health. Students who arrive more alert can follow a lab procedure, contribute to a discussion, or revise an essay with greater focus. Later starts may also improve safety. The CDC notes that drowsy driving is a serious risk for teen drivers, and sleep loss can slow reaction time. Therefore, a schedule that gives teenagers more opportunity to sleep supports both classroom learning and the commute before class.
- ③ Some families worry that a later start would disrupt bus routes, athletics, jobs, and younger students’ schedules. Those concerns deserve planning, not dismissal. However, inconvenience alone is weaker than evidence about students’ well-being. The American Academy of Pediatrics acknowledges that districts may face transportation and activity challenges, yet it still recommends later starts because adolescents need adequate sleep. Our district could survey families, coordinate practice times, and phase in changes before adopting a final schedule. In conclusion, moving the high school start time to 8:30 a.m. or later is a practical health and learning policy, provided leaders plan carefully with the community.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Copy the thesis statement. What three outcomes does the writer preview in that statement?

2 How does paragraph 2 use CDC information and concrete examples to reason from evidence to the claim? Answer in two sentences.

3 State the counterclaim in paragraph 3 and explain how the writer refutes it. Answer in two sentences.

4 What organizational job do the transitions “Therefore” and “In conclusion” perform in the argument?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Using the evidence below, write a 130 to 170 word, three-paragraph recommendation to the district school board about whether it should seek funding to replace diesel buses with electric buses: EPA, diesel exhaust contains pollutants that can harm health; U.S. Department of Energy, electric school buses have zero tailpipe emissions; EPA Clean School Bus Program, grants and rebates can help districts buy clean school buses. Introduce a clear thesis and preview your reasons, use at least two cited facts, address and refute one counterclaim, and end with a conclusion.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the thesis, circle each reference to an authoritative source, and bracket the counterclaim with its refutation. These marks will help you trace how the writer builds and defends an argument. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Copy the thesis statement. What three outcomes does the writer preview in that statement?	Thesis: "Our district should move high school start times to 8:30 a.m. or later." It previews improved learning, protected student health, and a safer school day.
2	How does paragraph 2 use CDC information and concrete examples to reason from evidence to the claim? Answer in two sentences.	The CDC links insufficient sleep with poorer academic performance and mental health, supporting the claim that later starts can improve learning and health. The examples of labs, discussions, essays, and drowsy driving show where alertness and reaction time matter.
3	State the counterclaim in paragraph 3 and explain how the writer refutes it. Answer in two sentences.	The counterclaim is that later starts could disrupt bus routes, athletics, jobs, and younger students' schedules. The writer responds that these logistical issues require planning, while the American Academy of Pediatrics still recommends later starts and the district can use specific planning steps.
4	What organizational job do the transitions "Therefore" and "In conclusion" perform in the argument?	"Therefore" connects the evidence about sleep and drowsy driving to the claim that later starts support learning and safety. "In conclusion" restates the position and adds the condition that leaders must plan carefully with the community.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our district should seek federal funding to begin replacing diesel buses with electric buses. This step would reduce students' exposure to harmful pollution and use outside funding responsibly. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency explains that diesel exhaust contains pollutants that can harm health. Because students wait near buses and ride them each day, reducing that exhaust is a sensible health goal. Electric buses also have zero tailpipe emissions, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Some taxpayers may worry that electric buses cost too much or require new charging equipment. However, the EPA's Clean School Bus Program offers grants and rebates that can lower a district's purchase costs. Leaders can start with a small fleet while planning charging sites. For these reasons, the board should apply for Clean School Bus funding. A gradual, funded transition can protect students while allowing the district to manage costs carefully.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect credible evidence to the claim, distinguish the counterclaim from the refutation, and identify the transitions' organizational roles. For the writing task, accept varied positions if the response has a clear thesis, relevant source-based evidence, reasoning, a counterclaim with refutation, and a logical conclusion.