

Bell Time Debate

Examine claims, evidence, and reasoning in a school-policy argument.

12.RI.1.C “Analyze the argument and specific claims in texts, examining whether the reasoning is valid, the evidence is relevant, and whether there are any false premises or unsupported claims.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each claim, circle evidence used to support a claim, and number any statement that rests on an unsupported assumption or a leap in reasoning.

A Later Bell for High School

- ① Our school board should move the high school start time from 7:35 to 8:30 next year. Teenagers need sleep, and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools begin at 8:30 a.m. or later to support adolescent health. Our own student survey found that 68 percent of respondents sleep fewer than eight hours on school nights. Starting later would give students a better chance to meet sleep recommendations. Because alert students can focus more effectively, the change could also improve learning in class.
- ② Research gives the proposal some support. A 2018 study in Seattle examined a later school start time and found that students slept longer on school nights and reported higher grades after the shift. However, Seattle’s schedule change occurred in one setting, so its results do not prove that every district will see identical effects. Our survey is also limited: it measures students’ reports of sleep, not causes of lost sleep, and students who answered may not represent the whole school. The board should collect attendance, grade, and transportation data before predicting local results.
- ③ Yet opponents say the later bell is obviously unnecessary. They note that several students already arrive early for band or sports, so every teenager must be able to function well before 8:00. This conclusion treats a small, self-selected group as proof about all students. Opponents also claim that a later start will force families to buy new cars, although they offer no explanation or evidence for that prediction. Supporters make a similar mistake when they promise that later starts will eliminate tardiness. Sleep may affect punctuality, but traffic, family duties, and bus routes can also matter. The strongest case is a monitored pilot, not certainty.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is the author's central claim? Name two pieces of evidence the author uses to support it.

2 How is the Seattle study relevant to the author's claim, and why does the passage say it cannot prove the same results will happen at this school?

3 Identify one false premise and one unsupported prediction in paragraph 3. Explain why each is weak.

4 Is the supporters' promise that later starts will eliminate tardiness valid reasoning? Use the passage to explain.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 90-120 word recommendation about a different school policy. State a clear claim, use one fact that could be checked, explain why that fact is relevant, and name one limitation or counterargument that keeps your conclusion from being too certain.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each claim, circle evidence used to support a claim, and number any statement that rests on an unsupported assumption or a leap in reasoning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the author's central claim? Name two pieces of evidence the author uses to support it.	The author claims that the board should move the high school start time from 7:35 to 8:30. Evidence includes the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation and the student survey showing that 68 percent of respondents sleep fewer than eight hours on school nights.
2	How is the Seattle study relevant to the author's claim, and why does the passage say it cannot prove the same results will happen at this school?	The study is relevant because a later start in Seattle was associated with longer sleep and higher reported grades. It cannot prove local results because it occurred in one setting, and districts may have different conditions.
3	Identify one false premise and one unsupported prediction in paragraph 3. Explain why each is weak.	The false premise is that because several band or sports students arrive early, every teenager can function well before 8:00. It wrongly generalizes from a small, self-selected group. The unsupported prediction is that a later start will force families to buy new cars, because no evidence or explanation supports it.
4	Is the supporters' promise that later starts will eliminate tardiness valid reasoning? Use the passage to explain.	No. The passage says sleep may affect punctuality, but traffic, family duties, and bus routes can also cause tardiness. Later starts might reduce some tardiness, but they cannot be assumed to eliminate it.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Westview High should install a bottle-filling station near the gym. During a five-day lunch-period count, I recorded 146 students waiting at the two nearby fountains, and several left without filling bottles. This observation is relevant because long lines reduce access during a short break. However, my count covered only one week and did not measure water use at other times. The school should compare installation and maintenance costs with data from a longer count before deciding. The evidence supports testing the need, but it does not prove that one station will solve every line.

Accept equivalent descriptions of the claims, evidence, limitations, and reasoning flaws when students accurately connect them to the passage. For Part 3, accept varied policies when the response includes a checkable fact, relevant reasoning, and a genuine limitation or counterargument.