Bell Time Debate

Compare evidence and reasoning about school start times.

8.RI.3 "Integration of Concepts Analyze ideas within and between selections including how specific sentences, paragraphs, sections, and text features contribute to the development and refinement of the ideas presented..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each author's main claim, circle the evidence each author uses, and put a 1 beside the background sentence that qualifies what the study can prove.

Should Schools Start Later?

1 BACKGROUND: Many middle and high schools begin before 8:30 a.m., although the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 or later. In 2016, Seattle moved high school start times from 7:50 to 8:45. Researchers studying two schools reported that students slept about 34 minutes longer on school nights after the change. The report did not prove that a later bell alone caused every result, because students' routines and classes also changed.

2 In an editorial titled "Sleep Before Sunrise," health writer Maya Ortiz argues that districts should delay the first bell. She uses the Seattle study to reason that more sleep can help students arrive alert and ready to learn. Ortiz also cites teen body-clock research, explaining that many adolescents naturally become sleepy later at night. Her final sentence calls later schedules "the simplest path to better learning." This conclusion connects the research to a policy choice, but it does not discuss transportation costs or after-school schedules.

3 District planner Evan Cole disagrees in a budget memo, "Changing the bell is not simple." He notes that buses often carry elementary, middle, and high school students in separate runs. If older students start later, Cole argues, a district may need more buses or may move younger children to an earlier time. He supports this concern with his district's route map and cost estimate, not with sleep data. Cole does not claim that teens need less sleep. Instead, his reasoning is that a useful health benefit must be weighed against local financial and scheduling limits.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the final sentence of paragraph 1 affect the reader's understanding of the Seattle study?

2. What evidence does Ortiz use, and what evidence does Cole use? Explain how their evidence supports different reasoning.

3. How does the title "Sleep Before Sunrise" contribute to Ortiz's argument?

4. Where do Ortiz and Cole disagree, and what point do they not disagree about?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence recommendation to a school board about later start times. Refer to one piece of evidence from Ortiz and one from Cole, then explain which reasoning should guide the board's decision.

ANSWER KEY

Bell Time Debate

GRADE 8 · 8.RI.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each author's main claim, circle the evidence each author uses, and put a 1 beside the background sentence that qualifies what the study can prove. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the final sentence of paragraph 1 affect the reader's understanding of the Seattle study?	**It cautions that the study shows changes after later starts, not proof that the later bell alone caused every outcome.**
2	What evidence does Ortiz use, and what evidence does Cole use? Explain how their evidence supports different reasoning.	**Ortiz uses the Seattle study and adolescent body-clock research to emphasize sleep and learning. Cole uses a local route map and cost estimate to emphasize practical scheduling and financial concerns.**
3	How does the title "Sleep Before Sunrise" contribute to Ortiz's argument?	**It frames early school times as taking away needed sleep, which supports Ortiz's position that schools should start later.**
4	Where do Ortiz and Cole disagree, and what point do they not disagree about?	**Ortiz presents later schedules as the simplest path to better learning, while Cole says districts must weigh the benefit against logistical costs. Cole does not disagree that teenagers need sleep.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would pilot a later start time after reviewing bus routes and costs. Ortiz's Seattle evidence suggests that later starts can give students more sleep, while Cole's route map and cost estimate show that a change can create local problems. A pilot is wiser than an immediate districtwide change because it tests the health benefit while checking whether the logistical concerns can be solved.

Accept recommendations for or against later starts if students accurately use evidence from both authors and explain how the evidence supports their decision. Students may reasonably prioritize health benefits, local logistics, or a compromise such as a pilot program.