

Reasons and Evidence Supporting Specific Points

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

When an author makes a CLAIM, look for the REASONS the author gives and the EVIDENCE (facts, examples, or numbers) that backs each reason. A strong claim is supported with evidence the reader can check; a weak one is not.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Why Middle Schools Should Start Later

Across the country, most middle schools open their doors before 8:00 a.m. Many start as early as 7:30. This schedule may have made sense decades ago, but a growing pile of evidence suggests it does not match how a young teenager's body actually works. Middle schools should push their first bell to no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

First, the science of sleep is clear. Doctors at the American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommend that children ages 11 to 14 get between nine and twelve hours of sleep each night. Yet a large 2023 survey of more than 5,000 sixth- through eighth-graders found that the average student in this age group slept only seven and a half hours on a school night. The mismatch is not because students stay up late by choice. Once children enter early adolescence, the brain releases the sleep hormone melatonin about two hours later than it does in younger children. The result is that a thirteen-year-old whose body is biologically ready to sleep at 11:00 p.m. cannot fall asleep just because the clock says 9:30.

Second, the costs of too little sleep are large. In a four-year study of three school districts that moved their start time from 7:25 to 8:35, attendance rose by nearly seven percent. Reports of car accidents involving teenage drivers dropped, and grades in math and science improved. Some readers may worry that a later start means a later end to the school day, which would cut into sports and after-school jobs. That concern is fair, but the same study found that schools were able to shorten transitions and trim a few minutes from each class so that the school day still ended within twenty minutes of its old time. Sleep is not a luxury for middle schoolers. It is a school-day issue, and the fix is to start later.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read the article. Then choose the best answer for each question.

1. What is the author's MAIN CLAIM?
 - A. Middle schools should start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.
 - B. Middle school students stay up too late watching screens.
 - C. All schools across the country start at the same time.
 - D. Sports and after-school jobs are more important than sleep.



2. Which REASON does the author give to support the main claim in paragraph 2?
 - A. Bus schedules have not been updated in decades.
 - B. A young teenager's body cannot fall asleep early enough to get the recommended hours of sleep before a 7:30 a.m. start.
 - C. Middle school teachers prefer a later start time.
 - D. Most middle school sports practices end after dark.
3. Which piece of EVIDENCE BEST supports the reason that students are not getting enough sleep?
 - A. "Doctors recommend nine to twelve hours of sleep for ages 11 to 14, but the average student in this age group slept only seven and a half hours on a school night."
 - B. "This schedule may have made sense decades ago."
 - C. "Sleep is not a luxury for middle schoolers."
 - D. "The brain releases the sleep hormone melatonin."
4. Which piece of EVIDENCE supports the reason that LATER start times help students DO BETTER at school?
 - A. The author has heard students complain about waking up early.
 - B. Most middle schools start before 8:00 a.m.
 - C. Melatonin is a sleep hormone.
 - D. When three districts moved their start time from 7:25 to 8:35, attendance rose nearly seven percent and math and science grades improved.
5. Why does the author mention sports and after-school jobs in paragraph 3?
 - A. To prove that students do not need much sleep
 - B. To address a concern that some readers might raise about a later start time
 - C. To list activities students should give up
 - D. To argue that sports practices should be moved to mornings
6. Which sentence shows that the author's evidence comes from a STUDY rather than from opinion?
 - A. "Middle schools should push their first bell to no earlier than 8:30 a.m."
 - B. "Sleep is not a luxury for middle schoolers."
 - C. "This schedule may have made sense decades ago."
 - D. "In a four-year study of three school districts that moved their start time from 7:25 to 8:35, attendance rose by nearly seven percent."
7. Which point does the EVIDENCE about MELATONIN BEST support?
 - A. Middle school students CHOOSE to stay up late.
 - B. Middle school students CANNOT fall asleep as early as younger children, because their bodies release sleep hormones later.
 - C. Middle school students should drink less caffeine.
 - D. Middle school students need more homework time.



8. Which reason does the author NOT give for starting middle school later?
- A. Sleep loss is linked to lower attendance.
 - B. Sleep loss is linked to teen car accidents.
 - C. Teenagers' bodies release melatonin later, so they cannot fall asleep early.
 - D. Earlier start times save school districts money.
9. Pick the SINGLE strongest piece of evidence in the article. Quote it (or paraphrase it) and explain WHY you chose it.

10. How does paragraph 3 connect to the author's main claim?
- A. It contradicts the claim by giving evidence against later start times.
 - B. It changes the topic to school sports.
 - C. It supports the claim by giving evidence that later start times improved attendance, safety, and grades.
 - D. It is unrelated to the claim.



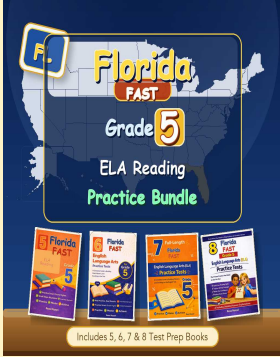
Answer Keys

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Explanations	
1. A	The first paragraph states this exact claim. B is a misconception the author actually argues against. C contradicts the text. D is the opposite of what the author says — the author calls sleep a school-day issue.
2. B	Paragraph 2 builds the biological-clock reason. A invents a bus claim. C invents a teacher preference. D names a sports detail that paragraph 3 mentions only as a counter-concern, not as the reason for the claim.
3. A	A pairs a real recommendation with a real average to show a gap — strong, checkable evidence. B is just a transition. C is the author's opinion. D names a hormone but gives no number to compare.
4. D	D is a real, measured before-and-after change — strong evidence. A is unsupported personal observation. B is a fact about CURRENT schedules, not about results. C defines a hormone but reports no result.
5. B	The phrase "some readers may worry" signals a counter-concern the author acknowledges and answers. A is the opposite of what the author argues. C and D each invent recommendations the author never makes.
6. D	D names a study, the length, the number of districts, the schedule change, and a measured result. A and B are opinions/claims. C is a guess about history.
7. B	Paragraph 2 directly links the late melatonin release to the inability to fall asleep early. A is the misconception the author argues AGAINST. C and D invent topics never mentioned.
8. D	The article never makes a money argument. A, B, and C each appear in the article as a reason.
9.	Answer: Sample answers: (1) The 7-hours-vs-9-12-hours comparison is strongest because it pairs an outside expert recommendation with a measured student average — it is checkable AND it shows a clear gap. (2) The four-year study showing nearly 7% higher attendance and better math and science grades is strongest because it shows a real before-and-after measure across THREE districts — not just one. NOT acceptable: picking the author's opinion sentences ("Sleep is not a luxury"), or giving no reason for the choice. Strong answers (1) pick an evidence sentence with NUMBERS or a NAMED study (NOT an opinion line) and (2) explain WHY it is strong (checkable, named source, measured result, large sample, etc.). Reject opinion-as-evidence answers.
10. C	Paragraph 3 reports a study showing higher attendance, fewer teen accidents, and better grades after later start times — that is direct support. A reverses the meaning. B mistakes the counter-concern (sports) for the topic. D ignores the explicit study.



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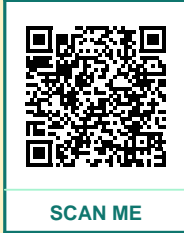
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