

Argument Writing: Claim, Reasons, Evidence

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

A Grade 6 argument (1) introduces a CLAIM (a debatable position, not just a topic or opinion), (2) supports the claim with clear REASONS, (3) backs each reason with EVIDENCE (facts, data, expert testimony, examples), (4) uses transitions like *because*, *since*, *therefore*, *in addition* to link ideas, and (5) closes with a conclusion that follows from the argument. An emotional appeal is not evidence.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Student draft - The Push for Later School Start Times

Our middle school should move its first bell from 7:35 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. because a later start would protect students' health, improve academic performance, and reduce dangerous early-morning commutes. Right now, sixth graders are climbing onto buses while the sky is still dark, and many arrive at school yawning before homeroom even begins.

First, later start times match what doctors recommend. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, middle schoolers need between nine and twelve hours of sleep per night, and their biological clocks shift later during early adolescence. A 7:35 a.m. bell forces most students out of bed before 6:30, well before their bodies are ready. Therefore, an 8:30 start would help students get the sleep their growing brains require.

Second, rested students do better in school. A 2019 study by the University of Washington tracked two middle schools after they pushed start times back by about an hour. Median grades rose by 4.5 percent and attendance improved within a single semester. In addition, teachers reported that students were more focused during morning classes. These are not small gains, and they came from one simple change.

Some people argue that a later start would create after-school scheduling problems for sports and family pickup. That is a real concern. However, three nearby districts have already moved start times later, and each used a small adjustment to the bus schedule to keep practices and pickups on track. The problem is solvable. For these reasons, our school board should adopt an 8:30 a.m. start for the next school year.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read the student draft. Answer the questions about argument structure, claim, evidence, and revision.



1. Which sentence states the writer's MAIN CLAIM?
 - A. Right now, sixth graders are climbing onto buses while the sky is still dark, and many arrive at school yawning before homeroom even begins.
 - B. Our middle school should move its first bell from 7:35 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. because a later start would protect students' health, improve academic performance, and reduce dangerous early-morning commutes.
 - C. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, middle schoolers need between nine and twelve hours of sleep per night.
 - D. Some people argue that a later start would create after-school scheduling problems for sports and family pickup.
2. What is the FUNCTION of paragraph 4 in this argument?
 - A. It introduces a brand-new claim the writer hadn't mentioned before.
 - B. It restates the same reason from paragraph 2 in different words.
 - C. It acknowledges a COUNTERCLAIM and responds to it before closing the argument.
 - D. It abandons the original claim and admits the other side is right.
3. Which piece of EVIDENCE in the draft is STRONGEST because it is specific, recent, and from a credible source?
 - A. Sixth graders are climbing onto buses while the sky is still dark.
 - B. A 2019 University of Washington study found median grades rose 4.5 percent and attendance improved within a single semester after start times moved later.
 - C. Most students are yawning before homeroom even begins.
 - D. Many parents have said that an earlier start is harder on everyone.
4. Read this sentence: *Kids hate waking up early because it is just terrible and unfair to make them suffer.* If the writer added this to paragraph 2, why would it WEAKEN the argument?
 - A. It uses too many short words.
 - B. It is an EMOTIONAL APPEAL with judgment words (terrible, unfair, suffer) rather than evidence a reader can verify.
 - C. It is too short to be a full sentence.
 - D. It repeats a fact from paragraph 1 word for word.
5. Which transition from the draft signals a CAUSE-AND-EFFECT relationship between a reason and its result?
 - A. First,
 - B. In addition,
 - C. Therefore,
 - D. However,



6. The writer is considering adding this sentence to paragraph 3: *A bus driver I know once told me mornings feel rushed.* Why is this a WEAK piece of evidence?
- A. It is from a real adult, which is not allowed in arguments.
 - B. It is an unsourced anecdote from a single, unnamed person - not measurable data and not connected to the academic-performance reason.
 - C. It is from 2019, which is too recent for an argument.
 - D. It uses the word *mornings*, which is too informal.
7. Which sentence would be the STRONGEST CONCLUSION for this argument?
- A. There are many opinions about start times, and people will continue to feel differently.
 - B. School start times might possibly be something the board could maybe think about looking into.
 - C. The evidence is clear: an 8:30 a.m. start would give students the sleep, the grades, and the safer commutes they deserve - and our board should adopt it for the next school year.
 - D. Did you know the first school bell in the United States was rung in the 1640s?
8. Read this sentence the writer wants to add: *A 2021 CDC review of sleep research found that adolescents who start school after 8:30 a.m. are 70 percent more likely to get the recommended hours of sleep.* Where does it BEST fit the LOGIC of the draft?
- A. Inside paragraph 4, with the counterclaim about scheduling.
 - B. At the very end of the conclusion, after the call to action.
 - C. Inside paragraph 2, supporting the claim that a later start matches doctors' recommendations.
 - D. At the very beginning, replacing the main claim.
9. Write a CLEAR CLAIM sentence (1 sentence) about a change you would argue for at your school. Your claim must (a) state a debatable position and (b) preview at least one reason.

10. Write TWO reasons that support the claim you wrote above. Each reason must be followed by ONE specific piece of evidence (a fact, a measurement, or a named source).



Answer Keys

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| Explanations | |
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| 1. B | B states a debatable position (move the bell to 8:30) AND previews three reasons (health, academics, commutes) - the textbook argument claim. A is background framing. C is supporting evidence for reason 1. D names a counterclaim, not the writer's own claim. |
| 2. C | Paragraph 4 names an opposing concern (after-school scheduling) and answers it with evidence from three nearby districts - that is counterclaim work. A is wrong: no new claim appears. B is wrong: the paragraph is about scheduling, not sleep. D is wrong: the writer concludes the problem is solvable and reaffirms the claim. |
| 3. B | B names the SOURCE (University of Washington), the YEAR (2019), and a SPECIFIC measured result (4.5% grade increase) - the markers of strong, verifiable evidence. A is observation, not data. C is informal generalization. D cites unnamed parents. |
| 4. B | Arguments are strengthened by facts, data, and named sources - not by feelings or judgment words. <i>Terrible, unfair, and suffer</i> are emotional language a reader cannot check. A is irrelevant. C is false (the sentence is complete). D is wrong (it isn't a repeat). |
| 5. C | <i>Therefore</i> introduces a logical result that follows from the previous statement (kids need more sleep -> a later start would help). <i>First</i> only marks order. <i>In addition</i> adds another point of the same kind. <i>However</i> signals contrast, not cause. |
| 6. B | Single, unnamed anecdotes carry little weight in an argument and don't address the academic-performance claim of paragraph 3. A is false: experts can be cited. C is false (2019 is recent). D is irrelevant - <i>mornings</i> is appropriate word choice. |
| 7. C | C restates the claim with force and ties back to all three reasons - the work of an argument conclusion. A is neutral (fits a balanced essay, not an argument). B hedges and weakens the position. D is an off-topic historical fact. |
| 8. C | Paragraph 2's reason is that a later start matches medical recommendations; a CDC study about sleep and start times directly supports that reason. A is about scheduling, not sleep. B drops new evidence after the conclusion. D would erase the claim. |
| 9. | Answer: Examples: (1) Our school should replace one weekly homework packet with a study-hall period because students would learn more from supervised practice than from rushed work at home. (2) Sixth-grade lunch should be lengthened to 35 minutes because students need time to eat and to use the bathroom without rushing. (3) Our school should offer one elective coding class because computer skills will help students in every future career. Accept any single sentence that (a) names a clear, debatable change and (b) signals at least one reason (often with <i>because</i>). NOT acceptable: a fact-only sentence, a question, an obvious statement nobody would argue with, or a sentence that takes no clear side. |



10. **Answer:** Examples for the lunch claim: Reason 1 - Students need enough time to actually eat. Evidence: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends at least 20 minutes of seated eating time, and our current lunch gives sixth graders only 16. Reason 2 - Short lunches cause bathroom lines. Evidence: A teacher survey from October showed that 8 out of 10 sixth-grade homerooms have students who miss bathroom breaks because of lunch overflow.
Accept any answer that gives (a) TWO distinct reasons that actually support the claim and (b) ONE specific piece of evidence per reason (data, study, measurement, named source, or named survey). NOT acceptable: two reasons with no evidence, two reasons supported only by feelings or judgment words, or one reason restated as two.



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