# Evaluating a Speaker's Argument

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

## Quick Review

To DELINEATE and EVALUATE a speaker's argument, a Grade 7 listener (1) identifies the CLAIM, (2) lists the REASONS, (3) judges whether each reason is supported by SOUND REASONING and RELEVANT, SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE (data, named studies, expert testimony) or merely by OPINION, and (4) notices reasons that are MISSING SUPPORT or that rely on emotional appeals.

## PART 1 — READ

*Read the passage. Then answer the questions.*

### Transcript: Theo's speech to the school board about adding a maker space

Our school should convert the unused storage room on the second floor into a STUDENT MAKER SPACE. I have three reasons. First, hands-on maker activities improve student engagement. According to a 2023 report from the U.S. Department of Education, middle schools that added supervised maker spaces during the 2021-2022 school year showed a 14 percent increase in average homework-completion rates within a single semester - a finding consistent across more than 90 schools.

Second, a maker space supports our STEM curriculum without adding instructional time. Our school's tech teacher, Mr. Burke, has documented that 22 of his 28 eighth-grade engineering projects last year were limited by lack of workspace and tools - things a maker space would directly fix.

Third, students will love it because making stuff is just super fun and obviously awesome for absolutely everybody who has ever been a kid. So the school board should approve a maker space for the storage room before the end of this school year.

## PART 2 — PRACTICE

*Read Theo's speech transcript and answer the items. Theo is a seventh grader asking the school board to approve a student maker space.*

**1.** What is Theo's MAIN CLAIM?

**A.** Making stuff is just super fun and obviously awesome.

**B.** Mr. Burke teaches a tech class with 28 students.

**C.** Our school should convert the unused storage room on the second floor into a STUDENT MAKER SPACE.

**D.** The Department of Education has published many reports.

2. Which of Theo's reasons is supported by the STRONGEST evidence?

   **A.** The first reason - increased engagement - supported by a 2023 U.S. Department of Education report covering 90+ schools.

   **B.** The second reason - STEM support - supported only by Theo's personal opinion.

   **C.** The third reason - students will love it - supported by a named study.

   **D.** All three reasons are supported equally well.

3. Which of Theo's reasons does Mr. Burke's *22 of 28 projects* data DIRECTLY support?

   **A.** The first reason: engagement.

   **B.** The third reason: students will love it.

   **C.** The second reason: a maker space supports STEM curriculum without adding instructional time.

   **D.** It does not support any of the reasons.

4. Which of Theo's reasons has the WEAKEST support, and WHY?

   **A.** Reason 1, because 90 schools is too small a sample.

   **B.** Reason 2, because tech teachers cannot be trusted to know their own classes.

   **C.** Reason 1, because government education reports are generally unreliable.

   **D.** Reason 3, because Theo offers ONLY an opinion (*making stuff is just super fun and obviously awesome*) and no real evidence - no study, no survey, no measurement.

5. Which sentence in Theo's speech is OPINION presented as if it were EVIDENCE?

   **A.** Middle schools that added supervised maker spaces showed a 14 percent increase in homework completion within a semester.

   **B.** Making stuff is just super fun and obviously awesome for absolutely everybody who has ever been a kid.

   **C.** 22 of Mr. Burke's 28 eighth-grade engineering projects were limited by lack of workspace and tools.

   **D.** The 2023 report covered more than 90 schools.

6. What would BEST STRENGTHEN Theo's THIRD reason (students will love it)?

   **A.** Citing a student survey or a published study showing that maker spaces increase student attendance, participation, or self-reported interest in school.

   **B.** Repeating the same claim more loudly.

   **C.** Saying the claim three times in slightly different words.

   **D.** Adding Theo's personal story about a craft project he did in fourth grade.

**7.** Theo says, *According to a 2023 report from the U.S. Department of Education...* Why is this MORE CREDIBLE than just saying *experts say*?

**A.** It uses bigger words.

**B.** It mentions the word *school*.

**C.** It NAMES the year, the publisher, and what was measured - so a listener could actually look it up and check.

**D.** It is longer.

**8.** Which question would BEST help a listener EVALUATE the SOUNDNESS of Theo's FIRST reason?

**A.** What color was the cover of the 2023 report?

**B.** Did Theo write the report himself?

**C.** How much did each maker space in the 90 schools cost?

**D.** Was the 14 percent gain CONSISTENT across the 90 schools, or did a few outlier schools pull the average up while most schools showed smaller gains?

**9.** Which UNSTATED ASSUMPTION underlies Theo's first reason (homework completion went up after the maker space, so the maker space caused the change)?

**A.** The assumption that the storage room is on the second floor.

**B.** The assumption that Theo is a seventh grader.

**C.** The assumption that the maker space - and not some OTHER change at those 90 schools - caused the 14 percent gain (a correlation-to-causation assumption).

**D.** The assumption that homework is required by law.

**10.** Which is the BEST EVIDENCE-BASED follow-up question to ask Theo after the speech?

**A.** What's your favorite color in the maker space?

**B.** Did the 2023 report describe the kinds of maker-space activities used in the 90 schools, and did the engagement gain persist after one semester or did it fade?

**C.** Was your speech at least three minutes long?

**D.** Have you been to the second floor before?

# Answer Keys

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | B | **C** | D | 6 | **A** | B | C | D |
| 2 | **A** | B | C | D | 7 | A | B | **C** | D |
| 3 | A | B | **C** | D | 8 | A | B | C | **D** |
| 4 | A | B | C | **D** | 9 | A | B | **C** | D |
| 5 | A | **B** | C | D | 10 | A | **B** | C | D |

## Explanations

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. C** | The MAIN CLAIM is the action Theo wants the board to take. Theo states it at the very start: convert the storage room into a maker space. A is part of reason 3 (and unsupported). B is background for reason 2. D is too general. |
| **2. A** | A names the strongest support: a recent, named, large-sample source (90+ schools) from a credible publisher. B mischaracterizes reason 2 (it has real classroom data, not just opinion). C is wrong (reason 3 has no real support). D is wrong (the supports clearly differ). |
| **3. C** | Mr. Burke's data is about engineering projects being LIMITED BY LACK OF SPACE AND TOOLS - the exact need a maker space addresses. C is the correct match. A is unrelated. B is about enjoyment. D ignores the obvious match. |
| **4. D** | Reason 3 is missing evidence entirely - it relies on Theo's enthusiasm. D names that failure. A is wrong (90 schools is a strong sample). B is wrong (tech teachers are credible for their own classes). C overgeneralizes. |
| **5. B** | B is sweeping opinion - not a fact, not a measurement, not a named study. A, C, and D are factual statements (a study finding, a classroom count, and a study description). |
| **6. A** | A replaces opinion with evidence (a study or survey) - exactly what reason 3 needs. B doesn't add support. C is repetition. D is anecdote, which is weaker than data for an evaluation claim. |
| **7. C** | C names the real reason: specific, checkable details (year + named publisher + measured outcome) make a claim verifiable. *Experts say* is vague and unfollowable. A, B, and D are not credibility markers. |
| **8. D** | D zeroes in on what makes a study really trustworthy: CONSISTENCY of effect across schools, not just a headline average. A is irrelevant. B misunderstands the source. C is irrelevant to the reasoning. |
| **9. C** | C names a real critical-listening move: just because two things happened together doesn't mean one caused the other. The 90 schools may have changed other things at the same time. A, B, and D are irrelevant assumptions. |
| **10. B** | B targets two real concerns a Grade 7 evaluator would have: WHAT KIND of activities (so we know what to plan) AND DURABILITY of the effect (so we know it isn't a short-term novelty). A, C, and D are irrelevant cosmetic questions. |

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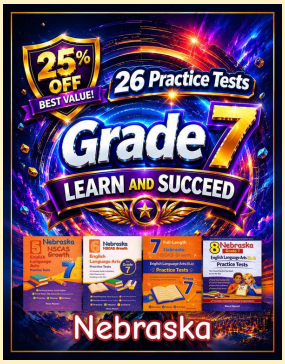


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