

Answer Key: Analyzing an Argument, Evidence, and Revision

Grade: 8 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **For teacher use only** RLA

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct reasoning and cites the passage, even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer is defensible and list common misconceptions to watch for. Paragraph numbers below refer to the bracketed markers [1]–[6] in the passage. Estimated grading time: ~5–7 min per packet.

Start Notice & Predict grade for effort · ~2 min

1 Predict the author's position from the title.

The author is **in favor of a later start** — they want the school day to begin at 9:00 instead of early in the morning. Full credit for any prediction that correctly names the pro-later-start position. Accept close wording ("wants school to start later," "thinks 7:45 is too early").

2 Retrieval — current start time. (paragraph [1])

7:45 in the morning. This is stated directly in paragraph [1]. A single-fact retrieval item; either they found it or they did not.

Build Read the Argument ~1 min

3 What happens to teenage sleep rhythms in adolescence? (paragraph [2])

From **paragraph [2]**: teenagers' natural sleep rhythms **shift later** during adolescence, so most teens cannot fall asleep before about **11:00 p.m.** Accept any answer stating that teens' bodies shift to a later sleep schedule / cannot fall asleep early.

Apply Analyze the Argument ~2 min

4 Identify the claim. (paragraph [1])

The school day should start at 9:00 (Franklin Middle School should move its start time to 9:00 a.m.). Accept any accurate restatement of that position. Reject supporting reasons offered as the claim (e.g., "teens need sleep" is a reason, not the claim itself).

5 Evaluate evidence quality — paragraphs [2] vs [5].

Paragraph [2] = STRONG. It cites a named, credible source (the 2014 American Academy of Pediatrics report), gives specific facts (teens can't sleep before ~11 p.m.; need 8–10 hours; recommended start no earlier than 8:30), and those facts are *directly relevant* to the claim about start time.

Paragraph [5] = WEAK. It relies on personal opinion and anecdote ("mornings are just unpleasant," "nobody I know enjoys waking up early," one cousin's college schedule) and an off-topic point about pancakes. It is not factual, not from a reliable source, and not clearly relevant to whether an 8th-grade school day should start at 9:00.

Full credit if the student labels [2] strong and [5] weak **and** gives a valid reason for each (factual/expert/relevant vs. opinion/anecdote/irrelevant).

6 Spot the irrelevant support. (paragraph [5])

The clearest irrelevant sentence is: "**The cafeteria also serves a better breakfast on the days it offers pancakes, which proves mornings could be improved in many ways.**" It is about cafeteria food, not about start times, so it does nothing to prove the 9:00 claim (and "proves" is an overreach). Also acceptable: the cousin's college-schedule sentence, since a college student's hours don't establish what a middle school should do. Accept either, with an explanation that it does not connect to the claim about start time.

7 Revision — strengthen weak support with real evidence.

Students should replace a weak reason in [5] with genuine evidence from [2] or [3]. **Model revision:** "The school day should start later because the American Academy of Pediatrics found that teens can't fall asleep before about 11 p.m. and recommends a start no earlier than 8:30 (paragraph [2])."

Another acceptable revision draws on [3]: "Later start times are worth it because districts that started later saw better attendance and fewer students late to first period (paragraph [3])."

Full credit for any rewritten sentence that (a) removes a weak/opinion/anecdotal reason and (b) substitutes accurate, relevant evidence actually found in the passage.

8 Which evidence best supports the claim?

8a — C. "The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m." This is expert, factual, and directly relevant to a school start-time claim.

Why the others are weaker: **A** (pancakes) is off-topic; **B** (a cousin's college schedule) is an anecdote about a different level of school; **D** ("nobody I know enjoys waking up early") is personal opinion.

8b: Accept any sentence explaining that C is stronger because it comes from a credible expert source and is directly relevant, while the others are opinion, anecdote, or off-topic.

Explain Revised Claim & Evidence (Q9) ~1–2 min

9 State a revised claim, support with two pieces of evidence, and judge their quality.

Acceptable revised claims (any focused, defensible position, e.g.):

- "Franklin Middle School should start at 9:00 because it fits teen sleep science."
- "The school should start at 8:30, matching the pediatricians' recommendation." (a narrowed claim)
- "The school should keep an early start" (disagreeing) — acceptable if supported with passage evidence used fairly.

Strong evidence students should choose (accept any two that fit the claim):

- Paragraph [2] — AAP report: teens can't sleep before ~11 p.m.; need 8–10 hours; recommended start no earlier than 8:30.
- Paragraph [3] — districts with later starts saw better attendance and fewer students late to first period.

Judging quality: the response should explain why each piece is strong — factual, from a named/credible source, and directly relevant — rather than opinion or anecdote. If a student uses paragraph [5] material, they should note that it is weak. Full credit for a focused revised claim + two relevant pieces of evidence with paragraph numbers + reasoning that evaluates their quality.

Response scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Claim (revised)	Evidence	Reasoning & quality judgment
3	Clear, focused, defensible claim about the start time.	Two accurate, relevant pieces of evidence, each tied to the correct paragraph.	Explains how evidence supports the claim <i>and</i> judges quality (strong vs. weak) with a valid reason.
2	Claim present but vague or only lightly revised.	One solid piece, or two with a minor error or vague location.	Some linkage and some quality judgment, but incomplete.
1	Only a topic or restates author with no focus.	Evidence weak, off-topic, or not from the passage (e.g., only opinion).	Little reasoning; no real judgment of evidence quality.
0	No claim / incorrect.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Articulate / Connect / Extend.

Articulate: accept any accurate one-sentence restatement of the claim ("the school day should start at 9:00 / later").

Connect: the cited strong evidence should be the AAP report (paragraph [2]) or the attendance study (paragraph [3]); both are legitimate strong support.

Extend: accept any reasonable weak spot + fix — e.g., "paragraph [5] uses opinion; the author could add data instead," or "paragraph [4] only asserts buses are solvable without proof; add an example of a district that rerouted successfully." More than one answer is defensible.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Evidence quantity vs. quality.** More sentences of "support" does not mean stronger support. Paragraph [5] has several reasons but they are weak; paragraph [2] has fewer but far stronger. Push students to weigh *quality* (factual, credible, relevant), not count.
- **Opinion stated as evidence.** "Mornings are just unpleasant" and "nobody I know enjoys waking up early" are opinions, not evidence. Evidence is verifiable — facts, data, or credible expert statements.
- **Relevance.** The pancakes/cafeteria sentence is a fact of sorts but is *irrelevant* to the start-time claim. Evidence must connect to the claim, not just be true.
- **Claim vs. reason.** The claim is the overall position (start at 9:00), not a supporting reason ("teens need sleep"). Watch for students naming a reason as the claim on Q4.
- **Anecdote treated as proof.** One cousin's college schedule (paragraph [5]) is a single anecdote about a different level of school; it doesn't establish what a middle school should do.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students rate paragraph [5] as strong (or miss the irrelevant sentence), run a 5-minute mini-lesson sorting sample sentences into "fact/data/expert" vs. "opinion/anecdote/off-topic." If Q4 shows students naming a reason instead of the claim, model the difference between the position and the support for it. The Q5 and Q8 items quickly reveal who can judge evidence quality; the Q9 responses show who can state a focused claim and defend it with well-chosen, well-judged evidence.