

Substitute Guide: Analyzing an Argument, Evidence, and Revision

Grade: 8 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension RLA

Learning goal (plain language)

Students read a short original persuasive passage, "Later Bells," and figure out its **claim** (the author's position), tell apart **strong and weak evidence**, spot a statement that does not really support the argument, and **revise** a weak point using real evidence from the passage. They finish by writing a short response that states a revised claim and backs it with two pieces of evidence, judging how good that evidence is. **You do not need an English or reading background to run this.** Everything students need — including the whole passage — is printed in their packet, and every question can be answered directly from that passage.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §110.24 (Grade 8 English Language Arts and Reading).

- **Argument analysis:** analyze the author's claim and how it is developed in an argumentative text.
- **Evaluating evidence:** evaluate whether the evidence used to support a claim is relevant, sufficient, and credible.
- **Revision:** revise a draft to strengthen support and improve clarity and focus.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted. Please confirm codes and wording against your official source.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Count and hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Confirm each student has a **pencil**. No devices or other materials are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet (4–6 pages) per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no calculator, no special materials.

Timing Suggested pacing (~45–60 min)

Segment	Time	What students do
Start — Notice & Predict	5 min	Q1–Q2 (predict position + retrieval)

Segment	Time	What students do
Build — Read the argument	10 min	Read "Later Bells," word bank; Q3
Apply — Analyze the argument	20 min	Q4–Q8 (claim, evidence quality, irrelevant statement, revision, best-evidence choice)
Explain — Claim + evidence response	5–10 min	Q9 revised claim + two pieces of evidence, judged
Close — ACE	5 min	Articulate / Connect / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional ~15 min	Write a counterargument

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's assignment is a reading and writing activity called *Analyzing an Argument, Evidence, and Revision*. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers. First read the short persuasive passage called *Later Bells*, which argues the school day should start later. Your job is to find the writer's main point, decide which of their reasons are strong and which are weak, and then improve a weak part. Every question can be answered from the passage, so if you're unsure, go back and reread. Answer the questions in order; if one is tricky, skip it and come back. Write in complete sentences where it asks you to explain. You may quietly read the passage aloud to yourself. Put your name, class period, and date at the top now. You have about 45 minutes; raise your hand if you need a word read to you or explained."

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** — the passage or any question — to a student or the class.
- If they are stuck, point them to the **paragraph numbers** [1]–[6]; every answer is in the passage.
- Remind them a **claim** is the writer's main position, and **evidence** is the facts/examples used to back it up (definitions are in the packet word bank).
- For "strong vs. weak," prompt: "Is that a *fact* from a reliable source, or just someone's *opinion*? Does it actually connect to the school start time?"
- Encourage the printed **sentence stems** for Q9 and ACE.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "Which paragraph shows that?" or "Is that reason really about start times?"
- It is fine if a student cannot finish the optional early-finisher task.

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of the passage or any question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence stems** and the **word bank** (definitions provided).
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q9 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed:** phones, computers, outside sources (everything is in the passage).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got and any questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for the common mix-ups of *evidence quantity* vs. *quality* (treating paragraph [5]'s many weak reasons as strong because there are more of them) and *opinion stated as evidence* ("mornings are just unpleasant"). A quick next-day mini-lesson sorting sample sentences into fact/data/expert vs. opinion/anecdote/off-topic would reinforce this well. The evidence-quality item (Q5) and the best-evidence choice (Q8) quickly show who can judge support; the revision task (Q7) and the Q9 response show who can state a focused claim and strengthen it with well-chosen evidence.

G08_RLA_Argument_01 — Analyzing an Argument, Evidence, and Revision Substitute Guide

Analyzing an Argument, Evidence, and Revision

Grade: 8 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension **Work mode:** Independent · pencil only RLA

Start Here

This is a **reading and writing task**. You will read a short persuasive passage, then answer questions and write a short response using a pencil. You do **not** need a computer or any device. Work by yourself and do your best thinking. Every question about the passage can be answered **from the passage itself** — the answers are on the page. Write in complete sentences where you are asked to explain. If a question is hard, skip it, keep going, and come back. Reading the passage aloud quietly to yourself is allowed and encouraged.

Start Notice & Predict 5 min

Look only at the title and the first sentence of the passage before you read the rest.

1The passage is titled "**Later Bells: Why Our School Day Should Start at 9:00.**" From the title alone, **predict the author's position** — what does the writer want to happen, and what side of the issue are they on?

2**Retrieval (read to find it).** Skim paragraph [1] once. According to the author, what **time** does the school day currently begin?

Build Read the Argument 10 min

Words to know (for analyzing an argument)

claim

the main point or position the writer is trying to prove.

evidence

facts, data, examples, or expert statements used to back up a claim.

reasoning

the thinking that explains how the evidence supports the claim.

counterargument

a point on the other side that an opponent might make.

relevance

how directly a piece of evidence connects to the claim; whether it truly matters here.

"Later Bells: Why Our School Day Should Start at 9:00" — an original argument

[1] Our school day begins at 7:45 in the morning, which means most students set an alarm before the sun is even up. I believe Franklin Middle School should move its start time to 9:00. A later start would leave students healthier, more alert, and better prepared to learn. This is not about laziness; it is about matching the schedule to how eighth-grade bodies actually work.

[2] The strongest reason is biological. According to a 2014 report from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the natural sleep rhythms of teenagers shift later during adolescence, so most teens cannot fall asleep before about

11:00 p.m. The report recommends that middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. so students can get the 8 to 10 hours of sleep their growing brains need. When the science of teenage sleep points one direction, our bell schedule should not point the other.

[3] There is also evidence that later start times help students do better in school. In a study of several districts that pushed their start times later, researchers found that attendance improved and the number of students who were late to first period dropped. Students who sleep enough are simply more able to focus, remember, and participate. A rested student is a ready student.

[4] Some people say a later start is impossible because of the bus schedule. But buses are a solvable problem, not a reason to keep tired students in early classes. Districts across the country have redesigned bus routes to fit later bells, and if they can do it, so can we.

[5] Besides, mornings are just unpleasant. Nobody I know enjoys waking up early, and my cousin, who is in college, says her classes never start before ten. The cafeteria also serves a better breakfast on the days it offers pancakes, which proves mornings could be improved in many ways.

[6] Moving the first bell to 9:00 is a change that fits the science, supports learning, and treats students like the growing young people they are. The alarm clock should work with our brains, not against them. It is time for later bells.

3In paragraph [2], what does the author say happens to teenagers' sleep rhythms during adolescence? Answer using details from the passage.

Apply Analyze the Argument 20 min

Every answer in this section is in the passage. Point to the paragraph in your head before you write.

4**Identify the claim.** In one sentence, state the author's main **claim** — the position the whole passage is trying to prove. (paragraph [1])

5**Evaluate evidence quality.** Paragraph [2] and paragraph [5] each try to support the claim. One uses **strong** evidence and one uses **weak** evidence. Decide which is which, and explain **why** — think about whether the support is factual, relevant, and reliable.

Paragraph [2] — strong or weak? Why?

Paragraph [5] — strong or weak? Why?

6**Spot the irrelevant support.** Paragraph [5] contains a sentence that does **not** actually help prove the claim about start times. Copy that sentence (or describe it) and explain why it is **irrelevant** to the argument.

7**Revision task — strengthen a weak point.** Paragraph [5] tries to support the claim with weak reasons ("mornings are just unpleasant," a cousin's college schedule). Rewrite that support so it is **stronger**: replace one weak reason with a piece of **real evidence from the passage** (from paragraph [2] or [3]) that genuinely supports the 9:00 start. Write your improved sentence.

8**Which evidence best supports the claim?** The claim is that the school day should start at 9:00. Which piece of evidence from the passage **best** supports that claim? Fill in the circle for ONE choice.

- "The cafeteria also serves a better breakfast on the days it offers pancakes."
- "My cousin, who is in college, says her classes never start before ten."
- "The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m."
- "Nobody I know enjoys waking up early."

8b. In one sentence, explain why the evidence you chose is stronger than the others.

Explain State a Revised Claim & Judge Your Evidence 5–10 min

Question 9. Now build your own short argument response. Write a **revised, focused claim** about the school start time (you may agree with the author, disagree, or narrow the claim — for example, "Franklin Middle School should start at 8:30 because that fits the pediatricians' recommendation"). Support your claim with **two pieces of evidence from the passage**, and for each one **judge its quality** — explain why it is strong (or note that it is the strongest available).

Sentence stems you may use: "My revised claim is..." · "One strong piece of evidence is... (paragraph ____)." · "A second piece of evidence is... (paragraph ____)." · "This evidence is strong because it is factual / from an expert / directly relevant..."

Claim (revised & focused)

Evidence (two pieces, with paragraph #)

Reasoning (why each piece is strong / high quality)

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Articulate

Say the author's **claim** in your **own words**, in one sentence, as if telling a friend the point of the passage.

Connect

Point to **one piece of strong evidence** in the passage (name the paragraph) that best backs up that claim.

Extend

Name **one weak spot** in the argument and, in a sentence, tell what the author could add to make it stronger.

Continue Early Finisher optional · ~15 min

If you finish early (no new materials needed):

Write a counterargument. On the back of this page, write one paragraph from the **opposite** side — an argument that the school day should **not** move to 9:00. Include at least one reason someone might give (for example, after-school jobs, sports schedules, or working parents). Then write one sentence explaining how the author of "Later Bells" could **respond** to that counterargument.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class period, and date filled in. Make sure questions 1–9 and the ACE box are answered. The early-finisher counterargument is optional but turn it in too if you did it.

G08_RLA_Argument_01 — Analyzing an Argument, Evidence, and Revision Student Packet



TEACHER ANSWER KEY FOLLOWS

Do not copy the pages after this divider for students.

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.