Name _____ Date _____

Tracing an Argument: Claims, Evidence and Reasoning

Directions: Read the essay from a student newspaper. Each question asks how one part of the argument connects to another: a claim, the evidence behind it or the reasoning that ties them together.

Lunch Needs Fifteen More Minutes

Every school day at Halden Park High, the lunch bell rings at 11:35 and the bell for fifth period rings at 12:00. In those twenty-five minutes, more than six hundred students are expected to buy food, find a seat, eat and get back to class. The school board should lengthen the lunch period from twenty-five minutes to forty.

Twenty-five minutes is not enough time for most students to eat lunch. Over ten school days in October, members of the student council timed the cafeteria line with stopwatches and found that the average wait from the door to the cashier was eleven minutes. In a council survey of 412 Halden Park students, 61 percent said they had thrown away part of a lunch in the past week because the bell rang before they could finish it. A lunch period has one job, which is to give students time to eat, and by that measure the current schedule fails.

A longer lunch would also give students a chance to get extra help during the school day. Of the students surveyed, 148 ride a bus that leaves the parking lot eight minutes after the last bell. The math lab and the writing center are open only after school, and last semester they served an average of twenty-six students a week, according to the school's tutoring coordinator. A student who has to catch a bus cannot stay for help, but every student is in the building at noon.

A longer lunch would give clubs a better time to meet as well. Fourteen of the school's twenty-nine clubs now meet only after school. Club advisers told the council that attendance at those meetings falls by about half during basketball and soccer seasons, when many members have practice. A meeting held at lunch would never compete with a practice, so students would no longer have to choose between a club and a team.

Some readers will ask where fifteen extra minutes could possibly come from. The extra time can come from the daily advisory period. Advisory now runs twenty-five minutes, from 8:10 to 8:35. In the council's survey, 70 percent of students said they spend most of advisory waiting for first period to begin. Cutting advisory to ten minutes would give lunch its fifteen extra minutes without adding a single minute to the school day.

The board will vote on next year's bell schedule at its March meeting. A school that expects students to think hard all afternoon should give them time to eat at noon, and forty minutes is a reasonable place to start.

1. The essay gives reasons about eating, extra help and clubs. Which statement expresses the main claim that those reasons support?

   A. Every club should move its meetings from after school to lunch.

   B. The cafeteria should hire more cashiers so that the line moves faster.

   C. The school should replace advisory with a daily tutoring period.

   D. The school board should give students a forty-minute lunch period.

2. The writer claims, "Twenty-five minutes is not enough time for most students to eat lunch." Which sentence from the essay gives evidence for this claim?

   A. "The math lab and the writing center are open only after school, and last semester they served an average of twenty-six students a week, according to the school's tutoring coordinator."

   B. "Fourteen of the school's twenty-nine clubs now meet only after school."

   C. "In a council survey of 412 Halden Park students, 61 percent said they had thrown away part of a lunch in the past week because the bell rang before they could finish it."

   D. "In the council's survey, 70 percent of students said they spend most of advisory waiting for first period to begin."

3. Which claim does this sentence from the essay most directly support?

   "Club advisers told the council that attendance at those meetings falls by about half during basketball and soccer seasons, when many members have practice."

   A. "A longer lunch would give clubs a better time to meet as well."

   B. "The extra time can come from the daily advisory period."

   C. "Twenty-five minutes is not enough time for most students to eat lunch."

   D. "A longer lunch would also give students a chance to get extra help during the school day."

4. In the paragraphs about eating, extra help and clubs, the first sentence states the paragraph's claim and the evidence follows. How does this order help readers?

   A. It keeps readers guessing about the essay's main claim until the end.

   B. It shows readers which of the figures came from the student council.

   C. It tells readers what each figure is meant to prove before they reach it.

   D. It lets readers judge the figures before they learn what the writer thinks.

5. The paragraph about eating ends with this sentence: "A lunch period has one job, which is to give students time to eat, and by that measure the current schedule fails." What does this sentence add to the paragraph?

   A. It answers readers who believe the cafeteria line already moves quickly enough.

   B. It explains why the line and survey figures show that lunch is too short.

   C. It reports another finding from the student council's survey of students.

   D. It states the paragraph's claim before any of the supporting evidence appears.

6. Which two sentences does the writer use to show why the current after-school tutoring schedule limits access to extra help?

- ☐ A. "Over ten school days in October, members of the student council timed the cafeteria line with stopwatches and found that the average wait from the door to the cashier was eleven minutes."
- ☐ B. "The math lab and the writing center are open only after school, and last semester they served an average of twenty-six students a week, according to the school's tutoring coordinator."
- ☐ C. "Fourteen of the school's twenty-nine clubs now meet only after school."
- ☐ D. "Of the students surveyed, 148 ride a bus that leaves the parking lot eight minutes after the last bell."
- ☐ E. "Advisory now runs twenty-five minutes, from 8:10 to 8:35."

7. Suppose the writer wanted to add one sentence to the paragraph about clubs. Which sentence would give the strongest new evidence for that paragraph's claim?

A. The chess club, the oldest organization at Halden Park, was founded more than fifty years ago by two teachers.

B. Every student at Halden Park should join at least one club before graduating, regardless of when it happens to meet.

C. Clubs give students a chance to lead projects, organize events and make friends outside their own classes.

D. Last spring the robotics club moved its meetings from after school to lunch for a month, and attendance doubled.

8. What does the paragraph that begins "Some readers will ask" contribute to the argument?

A. It states the essay's main claim for the first time, near the end of the argument.

B. It offers a fourth reason that twenty-five minutes is far too short a time for lunch.

C. It admits that a forty-minute lunch would unavoidably make the school day longer.

D. It answers a practical objection by showing where the extra time would come from.