Grade 6 – Argumentative Writing Work Sample: Meets

Task: Your class is studying about the environment and recycling. You are given four sources about community service and recycling efforts.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an argumentative essay** in which you give your opinion about whether the school should agree to clean a section of a highway or host a technology recycling day as your school's community service project. Make sure you clearly state your opinion and write several paragraphs supporting your opinion with reasons and details from the sources.*

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 4

The essay presents a clear claim supporting the adoption of a highway and provides multiple relevant reasons supported with accurate source evidence. The writer explains why roadside cleanup matters and uses more than one source to strengthen the argument. Reasoning is generally solid but could be more consistently developed, and some paragraphs rely on opinion or emotional appeals rather than deeper explanation. Overall, this is a strong argument with room for precision and elaboration.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is explicitly stated: "This is why Muirlands Middle School should adopt a highway." ○ Reaffirmed in the conclusion: "I hope that you will understand… adopting a highway is the right thing for our community and our campus." ○ Purpose is consistent: persuading the principal to support a highway-cleanup service project.	➢ **Strengthen Your Claim by Adding a Brief Preview of Reasons** ○ Add a sentence in the introduction highlighting the main reasons you will explain (environmental impact, scenic value, student learning).
✓ **Relevant, Accurate Reasons & Evidence** ○ Uses Source 1 effectively: "According to 'Keep Our Roadsides Beautiful,' 'Today, there are more than 4 million miles of roads and streets in the United States.'" ○ Incorporates President Johnson's quote from Source 1: "Beauty belongs to all the people." ○ Accurately references the scenic value of roadways: "Drivers and passengers can enjoy mile after scenic mile of grass, trees… but this is not possible if these scenic miles are cluttered with cans, bags…" ○ Provides reasons: environmental safety, wildlife protection, improved driving experience, community pride. ○ Reasons are relevant and tied to the claim.	➢ **Use Additional Specific Evidence From the Sources** ○ Include more factual details on pollution, wildlife impact, or roadside cleanup statistics.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Explains environmental harm: "trash is terrible for the environment… the safety of wildlife and the danger of pollution." ○ Provides reasoning for scenic benefits: litter "is not a sight that can raise someone's spirits." ○ Explains educational value to students: participation "will result in awareness of the increasing pollution and importance of recycling." ○ Some reasoning stays general or relies on emotional appeals ("innocent animals," "raise someone's spirits") rather than deeper explanation of ecological or community impact. ○ Could further explain *why* adopting a highway is more beneficial than other projects.	➢ **Deepen Your Reasoning** ○ After each piece of evidence, explain why it proves adopting a highway is the best choice over other options (technology recycling day).
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays consistently focused on why adopting a highway would benefit the community. ○ No major drift from topic; each paragraph reinforces the argument. ○ Some repetition ("amazing idea," "fantastic educational opportunity") reduces precision but remains relevant.	➢ **Reduce General or Emotional Repetition** ○ Replace phrases like "amazing idea" with more specific explanations of the benefits.

Organization: 4

The essay follows a clear structure with a strong introduction, body paragraphs organized by reasons, and a conclusion that restates the claim. Transitions support movement between ideas, although paragraphing could be more precise and some transitions could better show relationships. Organization supports the argument effectively and makes the essay easy to follow.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction Setting Up the Argument** ○ Opens with: "Have you ever wondered how trash affects our environment?" ○ Establishes the topic and leads naturally into the claim advocating for adopting a highway.	➢ **Add a Preview Sentence in the Introduction** ○ Identify the main reasons you will discuss to strengthen advance organization.
✓ **Logical Sequencing of Ideas** ○ Paragraphs follow a logical order: ▪ Importance of roadside beauty ▪ Source-based evidence about road mileage ▪ Wildlife and pollution dangers ▪ Educational benefits for students ▪ Conclusion reinforcing the claim ○ Each paragraph builds logically on the previous one.	➢ **Clarify Paragraph Focus** ○ Create clearer boundaries between environmental benefits and educational benefits.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Relevant Transitions** ○ Uses transitions such as "To begin with," "Another reason," "Also," and "Lastly" to move through reasons. ○ These convey addition but could more clearly signal relationships (cause, comparison, emphasis).	➢ **Use More Purposeful Transitions** ○ Replace basic transitions ("Also") with ones that show relationships ("Furthermore," "As a result").
✓ **Conclusion Offers Closure but Not Full Synthesis** ○ Concludes with: "That is why our school should adopt a highway." ○ Strong closure, but could synthesize multiple reasons more explicitly.	➢ **Enhance the Conclusion With Synthesis** ➢ • Summarize how your reasons work together rather than restating the claim alone.

Voice: 4

The writer's voice is committed, sincere, and persuasive. Tone is appropriate for an argument directed at the principal, and the writer uses emotion effectively without overwhelming the logical appeal. Some phrases are slightly informal or overly enthusiastic, but overall the voice supports the purpose.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaged, Purposeful Voice** ○ Shows commitment to the issue: "trash is terrible for the environment," "innocent animals are harmed."	➢ **Maintain Academic Tone Throughout** ○ Replace informal phrasing with more formal argumentative language.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Addresses the principal respectfully and logically: "Adopting a highway would be beneficial to our community."	➢ **Balance Emotional Appeals With Logical Reasoning** ○ Strengthen claims about wildlife and pollution by pairing them with precise data.
✓ **Slightly Informal or Enthusiastic Tone at Times** ○ Uses phrases like "fantastic educational opportunity," which could be more precise. ○ Occasional emotional appeal ("innocent animals") adds persuasion but reduces academic tone slightly.	➢ **Replace Enthusiastic Adjectives With Specific Descriptions** ○ Instead of "fantastic," specify exactly what students will learn.
✓ **Consistent Point of View** ○ Maintains an advocacy voice throughout with no drift into unrelated narrative.	➢ **Increase Authoritative Presence** ○ Use stronger, more confident phrasing grounded in evidence.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is purposeful and clear. The writer uses domain-specific vocabulary effectively, though some phrases lack precision or rely on emotional emphasis. Overall, word choice supports clarity and persuasiveness.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Effective Use of Environmental Vocabulary** ○ Uses words like "pollution," "environment," "wildlife," "scenic," and "harmful."	➢ **Avoid Repetitive Language** ○ Vary your descriptive words to strengthen your argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Domain-Specific Usage** ○ Incorporates "recycling," "dispose," "contaminating," and "groundwater."	➢ **Use More Technical Vocabulary** ○ Consider adding words such as "ecosystem," "runoff," or "hazardous waste."
✓ **Occasional Vague or General Phrasing** ○ Phrases like "terrible for the environment," "very useful," or "amazing idea" could be replaced with more precise terms.	➢ **Increase Precision** ○ Replace vague adjectives ("terrible," "amazing") with specific environmental terms.
✓ **Strong Descriptive Language** ○ "Cluttered with cans, bags, wrappers, leftover food" effectively evokes the problem.	➢ **Connect Vocabulary to Evidence** ○ Use vocabulary that matches the source material's terminology.

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are clear, readable, and varied. Some sentences are lengthy or rely on familiar patterns, but overall fluency is strong and supports the argument's clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Variety of Sentence Structures** ○ Uses complex sentences effectively, for example: "Drivers and passengers can enjoy mile after scenic mile… but this is not possible if these scenic miles are cluttered with cans, bags…"	➢ **Use Purposeful Transitions** ○ Replace "Also" with more specific transitions that clarify relationships.
✓ **Generally Smooth Flow** ○ Sentences connect logically and maintain steady pacing.	➢ **Read Aloud to Check Rhythm** ○ Identify where pacing slows or becomes repetitive.
✓ **Some Lengthy Sentences With Multiple Ideas** ○ A few sentences carry several clauses; could be separated for clarity.	➢ **Split Multi-Clause Sentences** ○ Break long sentences into smaller units for clarity and flow.
✓ **Occasional Repetitive Sentence Beginnings** ○ Repetition of "Another reason…" or "Also…" creates predictable rhythm.	➢ **Vary Sentence Openings** ○ Use prepositional or participial phrases to diversify beginnings.

Conventions: 4

Conventions are strong with mostly correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. A few minor errors appear but do not impede meaning.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Correct Spelling of Academic Vocabulary** ○ Words such as "environment," "pollution," "recycling," "contaminating," and "scenic" are spelled correctly.	➢
✓ **Mostly Correct Punctuation** ○ Commas appear in appropriate places, even in complex sentences.	➢ **Review Comma Placement** ○ Add commas after introductory words and phrases where needed.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Minor Errors Present** ○ Occasional commas missing after introductory elements or minor agreement issues.	➢ **Proofread Slowly for Minor Errors** ○ Check for small punctuation or agreement issues. ➢ **Standardize Any Citation Formatting** ○ If required, use consistent formatting when referring to sources.
✓ **Sentence Boundaries Are Clear** ○ No major run-ons or fragments.	➢ **Maintain Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ Ensure complete sentences throughout.

Use of Sources: 4

The writer uses more than one source accurately and appropriately. Evidence is relevant, correctly paraphrased or quoted, and supports the claim directly. Some opportunities remain to integrate sources more explicitly or more deeply, but overall the use of evidence is solid.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Uses Multiple Sources Effectively** ○ Quotes Source 1 explicitly: "According to 'Keep Our Roadsides Beautiful,' 'Today, there are more than 4 million miles of roads…'" ○ Uses President Johnson's quote accurately. ○ References scenic value (Source 1) and wildlife safety (Source 3) through paraphrasing.	➢ **Use More Specific Data From Sources** ○ Incorporate statistics or specific information about pollution impact.
✓ **Evidence Supports Argument Clearly** ○ Environmental and scenic examples tie directly to the claim advocating for highway adoption.	➢ **Include Evidence Addressing Counterargument** ○ Add source details comparing highway cleanup to technology recycling day.
✓ **Explanation Follows Evidence** ○ Follows facts with reasoning about pollution, wildlife endangerment, and community pride.	➢ **Deepen Explanation After Evidence** ○ Clarify why each specific detail proves a highway adoption is better.
✓ **Could Improve Attribution Consistency** ○ Some evidence is paraphrased without a clear signal phrase.	➢ **Increase Explicit Attribution** ○ Add phrases like "Source 3 explains…" before paraphrased evidence.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Ideas and Content:

Claim–Reason–Evidence Ladder

- Students practice connecting each reason to a source quote and then linking it back to their claim.

Source-Based Contrast Mini-Lesson

- Students generate evidence comparing the two community service choices to strengthen depth and reasoning.

Elaboration Expansion Routine

- Students practice adding one more "why this matters" sentence after each evidence detail to deepen reasoning.

Organization:

Reason-Preview Modeling

- Teachers model adding a brief list of reasons after the claim.

Transition Function Lesson

- Students match transitions to types (cause/effect, emphasis, contrast) and revise accordingly.

Conclusion Synthesis Workshop

- Practice combining multiple reasons into one synthesized closing statement.

Voice:

Tone Calibration With Mentor Texts

- Compare student writing to professional persuasive articles to study tone.

Emotion-to-Logic Revision Exercise

- Students revise emotional statements into evidence-based reasoning.

Audience-Awareness Mini-Lesson

- Teach strategies for addressing an authority figure with a polished tone.

Suggestions for Teaching Strategies to Support the Student Sample:

The following contain suggestions for teaching strategies and do not encompass a complete list of possible strategies.

Word Choice:

Replace-and-Refine Practice

- Students replace vague adjectives with precise academic vocabulary.

Environmental Word Banks

- Build a shared vocabulary list relevant to pollution and cleanup.

Modeling Technical Precision

- Teachers model how to incorporate more scientific or civic terms into an argument.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Mapping

- Students highlight sentence beginnings to adjust patterns.

Combining/Splitting Workshop

- Practice transforming long or choppy sentences into smoother ones.

Fluency Read-Aloud Routines

- Students revise based on areas where the writing sounds uneven.

Conventions:

Comma-Use Mini-Lessons

- Practice comma placement after introductory words and in compound sentences.

Editing Warm-Ups

- Students correct modeled sentences with similar patterns of error.

Peer Editing Checklists

- Students review each other's drafts for consistent conventions.

Use of Sources:

Citation Language Practice

- Students use consistent signal phrases when referencing sources.

Evidence–Reasoning Pairs

- Practice adding explanation directly after quoting or paraphrasing.

Source Comparison Exercises

- Students practice analyzing and using evidence to contrast competing options.