Grade 6 – Argumentative Writing Work Sample: Approaching

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: 3

The essay presents a clear position that communities should "put more trash cans around" and reduce litter by increasing disposal access. The writer offers several reasons for the claim, including animal safety and pollution reduction, but explanations are basic and source use is limited. Reasoning lacks depth, and some assertions are repeated rather than elaborated. Overall, the ideas are relevant and on-topic but underdeveloped.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is identifiable: "we need more trash cans around the community so there is less garbage laying around." ○ Purpose is to persuade the community "to put more trash cans around to help keep everything clean." ○ The claim is restated multiple times for emphasis but lacks precision about *how* trash cans will solve the problem.	➢ **Strengthen Your Claim With More Precision** ○ Add a sentence explaining *why* more trash cans are the best solution—for example, accessibility, convenience, and behavior change.
✓ **Relevant, Accurate Reasons & Evidence** ○ Gives reasons: trash harms animals ("animals can choke on stuff they don't know is bad for them"), pollution ("the world will get more smoggy just from litter"), and community cleanliness. ○ References Source 3 implicitly ("throwing trash around or dumping oil down the drain makes it harder to clean the water"), though not cited. ○ Lacks direct quotations or specific evidence from the sources about environmental impact or community sanitation. ○ Reasons are relevant but broad, and evidence is mostly general rather than text-based.	➢ **Use Specific, Accurate Evidence From the Sources** ○ Quote or paraphrase details about pollution, water contamination, or ecosystem harm from the provided articles to make your reasons stronger.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Provides some reasoning: more trash cans mean "no garbage laying around," which helps animals and reduces smog. ○ Reasoning is surface-level and often repeated rather than expanded ("this will help the community," "it will make the world cleaner"). ○ Does not explain *why* trash cans would reduce pollution or how improper disposal affects ecosystems. ○ No connection to counterarguments (e.g., cost, maintenance, behavior change). ○ Minimal explanation of source ideas beyond brief references.	➢ **Deepen Your Reasoning for Each Reason** ○ Explain *how* more trash cans reduce pollution, *why* animals are at risk when trash is left out, and *what* happens environmentally when people dump waste improperly.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays on topic consistently—every paragraph connects back to keeping the community clean. ○ Some drift into general statements about "a world filled with garbage" rather than supporting the claim with specific reasoning. ○ Conclusion reinforces the claim but repeats earlier ideas without adding insight.	➢ **Keep Ideas Focused and Avoid Repetition** ○ Replace repeated statements with more detailed explanations or examples rather than restating "it helps the community."

Organization: 3

The essay has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Ideas follow a generally logical structure, but transitions are basic or repetitive, paragraphs sometimes blend similar ideas, and the conclusion restates earlier points without synthesizing them. Organization supports understanding but lacks the coherence and refinement of a higher-level response.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction but Limited Preview** ○ Opens with the problem ("people throwing trash on the ground causes pollution") and the proposed solution ("we need more trash cans"). ○ Does not preview the key reasons that will support the argument.	➢ **Add a Clear Preview in the Introduction** ○ Briefly list the key reasons (pollution, wildlife safety, community appearance).
✓ **Logical Sequencing** ○ Moves from problem statement to environmental harm to animal harm to broader consequences to conclusion. ○ Order makes sense but sections occasionally repeat similar ideas rather than deepen them.	➢ **Group Ideas More Precisely** ○ Keep pollution-related points together; place animal-related points in a separate, focused paragraph.
✓ **Basic or Repetitive Transitions** ○ Uses simple connectors ("also," "for example," "this will help"), which keep the flow but do not show relationships such as cause, contrast, or consequence. ○ Some paragraphs begin abruptly without transition from previous idea.	➢ **Strengthen Transitions** ○ Use more purposeful transitions showing cause/effect ("As a result," "This leads to…").

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Conclusion Restates Without Synthesis** ○ Restates: "the world will get cleaner and animals won't get hurt," which repeats earlier sentences. ○ Does not tie the argument together or leave the reader with a final insight.	➢ **Revise the Conclusion for Synthesis** ○ Summarize *why* the solution matters rather than repeating earlier points.

Voice: 3

The voice is sincere and shows concern for the environment and animals. However, the tone is sometimes repetitive, overly general, and conversational. The writer's purpose is evident, but the voice lacks the precision and confident argumentative tone expected at higher levels.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Sincere, Purposeful Voice** ○ Expresses care: "animals can choke on stuff they don't know is bad for them," "the world will be filled with garbage."	➢ **Maintain Consistent Purposeful Tone** ○ Keep voice focused on persuading the community rather than stating general concerns.
✓ **Occasional Conversational Tone** ○ Uses vague, informal phrases like "stuff," "bad for them," "help the community."	➢ **Replace Informal Language With Academic Tone** ○ Use terms like "litter," "hazardous to wildlife," "environmental harm."
✓ **Repetition Weakens Effectiveness** ○ Repeats versions of "this will help the community" multiple times without adding nuance.	➢ **Avoid Repetitive Phrasing** ○ Expand on ideas rather than repeating the same general statement.
✓ **Limited Persuasive Authority** ○ Lacks strong connective reasoning or confident phrasing to fully persuade the audience.	➢ **Strengthen Persuasive Voice** ○ Add firm, confident statements supported by evidence.

Word Choice: 3

Word choice is generally understandable, but vocabulary is limited, general, or repetitive. The essay lacks precise, domain-specific language that would strengthen the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **General Word Choice** ○ Uses broad terms like "stuff," "bad," "help the community," "makes everything cleaner."	➢ **Clarify Descriptions** ○ Add specific details such as "plastic waste," "chemical runoff," or "household trash."
✓ **Limited Academic Vocabulary** ○ Does not use words such as "pollutants," "ecosystem," "debris," "waste disposal," or "community sanitation."	➢ **Use More Precise Environmental Vocabulary** ○ Replace "stuff that's bad for them" with "harmful litter or toxic materials."
✓ **Repetition of Key Terms** ○ Repeats "trash," "pollution," and "garbage" without adding specific description.	➢ **Expand Word Variety** ○ Introduce synonyms and domain-specific terms from the sources.
✓ **Occasional Vague or Imprecise Language** ○ "A world filled with garbage" describes a problem but lacks specificity.	➢ **Avoid Vague or Repetitive Words** ○ Strengthen clarity with precise nouns and verbs.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are mostly clear and readable, but repetitive structures and limited variety reduce effectiveness. Some sentences rely on simple construction, and transitions between sentences are minimal.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Mostly Clear Sentences** ○ Sentences are understandable and complete.	➢ **Read Aloud to Improve Rhythm** ○ Identify repetitive patterns and adjust for smoother flow.
✓ **Repetitive Patterns** ○ Several sentences begin with "This will…" or "It will…" creating monotony.	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings** ○ Start some sentences with phrases or dependent clauses.
✓ **Limited Sentence Variety** ○ Relies heavily on simple subject-verb constructions.	➢ **Add More Complex Sentence Structures** ○ Combine related ideas to create more dynamic flow.
✓ **Transitions Within Paragraphs Are Basic** ○ Uses "also" or "for example" without variation or sophistication.	➢ **Replace Overused Transitions** ○ Use transitions such as "Furthermore," "As a result," or "Consequently."

Conventions: 3

The writing shows general control of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, but errors appear often enough to distract. Some run-on tendencies and missing commas are present. Errors do not obscure meaning but reduce clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Is Mostly Correct** ○ Everyday words spelled accurately; minor errors present but not consistent.	➢ **Check Spelling Carefully** ○ Correct small errors through slow proofreading.
✓ **Some Run-Ons and Missing Commas** ○ Sentences occasionally combine multiple ideas without proper punctuation.	➢ **Fix Run-Ons by Adding Periods or Commas** ○ Separate multi-idea sentences into clearer units. ➢ **Add Missing Commas in Compound Sentences** ○ Improve readability with proper sentence punctuation.
✓ **Capitalization Generally Correct** ○ Proper nouns and sentence starts are typically capitalized correctly.	➢
✓ **Grammar Errors Appear Occasionally** ○ Minor agreement and phrasing issues reduce polish.	➢ **Review for Grammar Consistency** ○ Ensure subjects and verbs match; revise any awkward sentence constructions.

Use of Sources: 2

The essay includes some ideas that resemble source content but does not explicitly cite or paraphrase from the articles. Evidence is mostly general rather than source-based. Several claims could be strengthened significantly with direct reference to the texts.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Minimal Use of Sources** ○ References to pollution, water contamination, or animal harm resemble concepts from the sources but are not grounded in explicit evidence.	➢ **Include Specific Evidence From the Sources** ○ Quote or paraphrase details about pollution, wildlife dangers, or community sanitation.
✓ **No Attributions or Citations** ○ No phrases such as "According to Source 1…" or paraphrased details identifying a source.	➢ **Add Explicit Attribution** ○ Use phrases like "Source 2 states that…" to clearly connect evidence to the argument.
✓ **Generalized Evidence** ○ Claims like "animals can choke on stuff" or "the world will get more smoggy" lack support from the provided articles.	➢ **Replace Vague Claims With Source-Based Facts** ○ Use details about improper waste disposal, ecosystem impact, or environmental consequences.
✓ **Reasoning Not Fully Linked to Evidence** ○ Explanations rely on opinion rather than text-supported reasoning.	➢ **Explain How Each Piece of Evidence Supports the Claim** ○ Follow each evidence point with reasoning that links it to your main argument.

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 Expansion Frames

- Provide structured frames for expanding each idea:
  "One reason… This matters because… According to Source __… This shows that…"

Source-Based Evidence Hunt

- Students identify three pieces of evidence from the sources that directly support their claim and annotate how each supports their reasoning.

Reasoning Deep Dive Mini-Lesson

- Model how to extend reasoning by asking "why does this happen?" and "why does this matter?" after each claim, demonstrating how to avoid repetition.

Organization:

Paragraph-Purpose Mapping

- Students identify the purpose of each paragraph and reorganize ideas accordingly.

Transition Function Mini-Lessons

- Teach transitions that indicate relationship types (cause, contrast, addition).

Conclusion Upgrade Routine

- Practice rewriting conclusions to synthesize ideas rather than repeat them.

Voice:

Formal vs. Informal Tone Sorting

- Students highlight conversational phrases and revise them to academic tone.

Persuasive Sentence Starters

- Provide frames such as "This is critical because…" or "The community must act because…"

Purpose-driven Voice Workshop

- Students revise drafts to match an "informed, persuasive citizen" voice.

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:

Domain Vocabulary Word Wall

- Students learn and practice environmental/argument-specific vocabulary.

Replace-and-Refine Exercises

- Students replace vague words with stronger, more precise terms.

Example-Specificity Modeling

- Teacher models how to turn a general phrase into a detailed, concrete description.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Charting

- Students highlight repeated sentence beginnings and revise for variation.

Combining-and-Splitting Sentences Workshop

- Practice enhancing fluency by adjusting sentence length and structure.

Transition Type Mini-Lesson

- Teach cause-and-effect, contrast, and addition transitions explicitly.

Conventions:

Sentence Boundary Practice

- Students correct modeled run-ons and fragments.

Comma Placement Mini-Lessons

- Practice commas in compound and complex sentences.

Proofreading Checklists

- Students use targeted conventions checklists during revisions.

Use of Sources:

Evidence Hunt From Sources

- Students identify and annotate key details in each source that support the argument.

Evidence + Reasoning Writing Frames

- Use structured frames to link evidence to analysis.

Citation Mini-Lesson

- Teach consistent use of attribution phrases and how to paraphrase accurately.