Grade 7 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about the role of second language learning in American schools and how most schools in Europe require all students to learn two languages. You are given four sources (two research articles, a compilation of letters to the editor, and an interview) that provide information about the pros and cons of foreign language studies and discuss at what age it is best to learn a foreign language.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an argumentative essay** in which you establish an argumentative claim for or against the inclusion of second language instruction in local elementary schools. Make sure to address potential counterarguments in your essay and support your claim with information from the sources you have examined.*

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

Ideas and Content: 5

The essay makes a clear and compelling argument in favor of offering foreign language classes in elementary school. The writer presents multiple well-developed reasons, integrates accurate and relevant evidence from the sources, and offers generally strong explanation linking evidence to the argument. A counterargument is acknowledged and addressed with reasoning. Minor opportunities remain for deeper elaboration in places, but overall this is a strong and well-supported argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is direct and well framed: "you should include this course at the elementary school, because the benefits outweigh any negatives." ○ Purpose remains consistent: persuading the school board to adopt foreign language instruction. ○ The conclusion reinforces this: "foreign language class should be part of the elementary school curriculum."	➢ **Add a Clear Preview to Strengthen the Claim** ○ Include a sentence in the introduction outlining the three major reasons you will discuss (academic benefits, economic advantages, communication needs).
✓ **Relevant, Accurate Reasons & Evidence** ○ Academic benefits supported with Source 4: ▪ "Analyzing the grammar of the second language makes you more aware of language structure and usage in general…" ▪ "Students who learn a second language also tend to perform better… in math, science, and social studies." ○ Employment benefits supported with Source 1: ▪ "we need to be able to compete on relationships and service, and languages are an important factor." ○ Communication benefits supported with logical reasoning and a personal anecdote. ○ Evidence accurately reflects the source material and is well selected for the argument.	➢ **Integrate Evidence From the Sources Even More Explicitly** ○ Use more signal phrases ("According to Source __…") to strengthen attribution and clarify which article each quote comes from.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Strong explanation of academic benefits: "kids will get in the habit of noticing grammar structures, writing with good grammar…" ○ Connects economic arguments to real-world employment: "learning a new language could be the key to the children of our community's success." ○ Personal anecdote helps illustrate the communication argument, showing how language barriers affect relationships. ○ Reasoning is strong but occasionally relies on general statements ("benefits outweigh the negatives") without deeper explanation of *how* or *why*.	➢ **Deepen Reasoning in Key Places** ○ Expand on *why* early language learning improves academic performance and *how* language skills translate into stronger career opportunities.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Focus is consistent and remains tied to the claim throughout. ○ Each paragraph introduces a new, relevant reason connected to the central argument. ○ Counterargument is acknowledged ("Adding another class takes up valuable time…") and directly addressed with evidence. ○ No major digressions; even the personal story is tied back to the argument's communication claim.	➢ **Tighten Focus by Reducing Repetition** ○ Replace repeated general statements about benefits with new, more specific explanations that reinforce the argument.

Organization: 5

The essay follows a clear, logical structure with a purposeful introduction, well-sequenced body paragraphs, smooth transitions, and a strong concluding statement. Each section builds upon the previous one, and the organizational structure enhances clarity and persuasiveness.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Purposeful Introduction With Clear Context** ○ Opens with an engaging idea about global connectivity: "As we move and grow into the future, learning a foreign language has become more important…" ○ Context naturally leads to the claim and positions the audience (the school board).	➢ **Include a Strong Reason Preview in the Introduction** ○ Add a single sentence that previews your three main reasons to strengthen early clarity.
✓ **Logical Sequencing of Reasons** ○ Moves through well-defined reasons: ▪ academic benefits ▪ economic/employment opportunities ▪ cultural/social benefits ▪ counterargument and rebuttal ✓ • Each paragraph builds logically on earlier points.	➢ **Ensure Each Paragraph Focuses on a Single Central Reason** ○ Especially in the academic benefits paragraph, separate ideas into clearer sub-points.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Effective Transitions** ○ Uses transitions such as "One reason," "Another benefit," and "Finally" to guide the reader. ○ Transitions signal progression and support coherence.	➢ **Use Even More Sophisticated Transitions** ○ Try transitions that show relationships: "More importantly," "In contrast," "As a result."
✓ **Compelling Conclusion** ○ Ends with a clear, persuasive final line: "That is why foreign language class should be part of the elementary school curriculum." ○ Reinforces the argument and its rationale.	➢ **Add a Synthesis Statement in the Conclusion** ○ Show how all your reasons combine to make a compelling argument.

Voice: 5

The voice is confident, persuasive, and well-tailored to a school board audience. The writer conveys credibility and control while maintaining a respectful, professional tone. Emotional and logical appeals are well balanced.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Confident, Authoritative Tone** ○ Uses strong statements such as "the benefits outweigh any negatives," and "learning a new language could be the key to the children of our community's success."	➢ **Add One or Two More Formal Phrasings** ○ Strengthen the authoritative tone in places with more polished sentence structures.
✓ **Engaged and Purposeful** ○ Shows investment in the issue: "I need to be able to communicate with her and other kids like her."	➢ **Maintain Academic Precision Throughout** ○ Replace general phrases ("help people succeed") with specific outcomes tied to evidence.
✓ **Awareness of Audience** ○ Maintains a respectful tone appropriate for addressing decision-makers (the school board).	➢ **Increase Direct Address to the Decision-Makers** ○ Consider adding "I urge you to…" or similar phrases to enhance persuasive force.
✓ **Balanced Emotional and Logical Appeals** ○ Personal anecdote adds sincerity, while the following analysis remains grounded in evidence.	➢ **Ensure the Personal Anecdote Always Connects Back to the Claim** ○ Add one clarifying sentence linking the anecdote to the broader communication argument.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is generally precise, clear, and purposeful. The writer uses several strong academic terms and persuasive phrases. A few opportunities remain for more precise or discipline-specific vocabulary, but overall word choice effectively strengthens the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Strong Academic Vocabulary** ○ Uses terms such as "curriculum," "proficiency," "academic benefit," "employment opportunities."	➢ **Add More Precise Technical Vocabulary** ○ Use terminology from language acquisition and cognitive science.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Clarity in Explanations** ○ Phrases like “exercise the brain” and “be able to compete… in service and relationships” strengthen clarity.	➢ **Clarify Abstract Statements** ○ Add details to terms like “success” to explain what it looks like academically or socially.
✓ **Some General or Repetitive Expressions** ○ Repeats ideas about “communication” and “success” without always deepening nuance.	➢ **Eliminate Minor Repetition** ○ Replace repeated general phrases with more specific language tied to evidence.
✓ **Opportunities for Greater Precision** ○ Could use more domain-specific terms (e.g., “cognitive flexibility,” “metalinguistic awareness”).	➢ **Use More Domain-Specific Phrasing** ○ Incorporate words like “bilingual advantage,” “executive functioning,” or “fluency development.”

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences show solid variety and flow, supporting clarity and persuasiveness. Some sentences are long or densely packed, but overall fluency is strong and readable.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Varied Sentence Structures** ○ Uses simple, compound, and complex structures effectively.	➢ **Read Aloud to Check Flow** ○ Listen for places where sentence length or rhythm feels uneven.
✓ **Smooth Pacing** ○ Transitions (“Another benefit…,” “Some people worry…”) help maintain flow.	➢ **Use Subtle Transitions Inside Paragraphs** ○ Insert transitions that emphasize relationships (“As a result,” “In contrast”).
✓ **Occasional Lengthy or Multi-Idea Sentences** ○ A few sentences combine several claims or pieces of evidence at once.	➢ **Break Up Long Sentences** ○ Convert multi-clause sentences into two shorter statements when clarity would improve.
✓ **Minor Repetition in Sentence Beginnings** ○ Several sentences begin with “Learning” or “Students who,” but this does not majorly impede fluency.	➢ **Add More Variety to Sentence Openings** ○ Use prepositional or introductory phrases for stronger rhythm.

Conventions: 4

Conventions are generally strong, with accurate spelling, punctuation, and sentence boundaries throughout the piece. Minor errors are present but do not impede meaning.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Grammar** ○ No significant spelling issues. Grammar is consistently correct.	➢ **Maintain Consistent Citation Conventions** ○ Ensure signal phrases and paraphrases follow the same punctuation pattern.
✓ **Effective Punctuation** ○ Commas used accurately in complex sentences.	➢ **Review Comma Usage** ○ Add commas after introductory phrases and dependent clauses when appropriate.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Minor Errors** ○ Occasional comma placement or minor capitalization adjustments could strengthen clarity.	➢ **Proofread Carefully** ○ Look for small punctuation improvements to strengthen clarity.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No fragments or run-ons.	➢ **Check for Subtle Grammar Refinements** ○ Review verb tense consistency and parallel structure.

Use of Sources: 5

The essay uses sources effectively, integrating accurate, relevant, and well-selected evidence that directly supports the argument. The writer paraphrases and quotes appropriately, provides strong explanation after each piece, and incorporates counterargument evidence with clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate and Relevant Use of Multiple Sources** ○ Source 4: Academic and cognitive benefits (grammar awareness, test performance). ○ Source 1: Employment and global service benefits. ○ Source 3: Concerns about confusion and class time.	➢ **Increase Balance Across All Sources** ○ Include one more detail from Source 2 or clarify its relevance.
✓ **Effective Explanation of Evidence** ○ Explains cognitive benefits clearly: early language learning improves grammar awareness and academic performance. ○ Connects economic evidence to long-term benefits: language skills increase job opportunities.	➢ **Deepen Reasoning After Evidence** ○ Explain more explicitly *why* each piece of evidence proves the benefits of early instruction.
✓ **Purposeful Use of Counterargument Evidence** ○ Accurately acknowledges Source 3 concerns and responds logically with stronger evidence.	➢ **Enhance Rebuttal With More Source Detail** ○ Include a bit more quotation or paraphrase from Source 3 before refuting it.
✓ **Strong Integration of Paraphrase and Quotation** ○ Uses both strategies to support claims, maintaining accuracy and relevance.	➢ **Add More Explicit Attribution** ○ Use "According to Source 4…" to clearly label the source of each idea.

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:

Evidence–Explanation Pairing Routine

- Students practice pairing each quote with a clear analytical sentence that shows how it supports the argument, strengthening reasoning.

Reason Preview and Claim Framing Mini-Lesson

- Teach students to strengthen introductions by previewing their major reasons, which helps improve organizational clarity.

Counterargument and Rebuttal Deepening Workshop

- Students practice identifying the opposing viewpoint and then selecting the strongest possible evidence to refute it.

Organization:

Reason Preview Modeling

- Teach students to include a preview sentence at the end of the introduction to frame the structure.

Transition Function Mini-Lesson

- Students practice identifying the purpose of transitions (contrast, addition, cause/effect).

Conclusion Synthesis Workshop

- Students practice writing concluding paragraphs that bring all major ideas together rather than just repeating them.

Voice:

Tone Calibration With Mentor Texts

- Compare this piece with high-quality persuasive letters to analyze tone choices.

Audience Awareness Mini-Lesson

- Teach students to consider audience expectations when shaping voice.

Purposeful Call-to-Action Workshop

- Students practice writing closing statements aimed directly at decision-makers.

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:

Academic Vocabulary Deep-Dive

- Students expand their vocabulary through targeted lists tied to the content area.

Replace-and-Refine Exercises

- Practice revising vague phrases into precise academic language.

Contextual Word-Choice Modeling

- Teacher models choosing stronger, content-specific terms.

Sentence Fluency:

Combining/Splitting Sentence Activities

- Help students learn how sentence structure affects pacing and clarity.

Sentence-Opening Variety Charts

- Students track repeated openings and revise for variety.

Fluency Read-Aloud Routine

- Students practice reading aloud to catch awkward phrasing.

Conventions:

Comma Practice Mini-Lesson

- Students practice adding commas to introductory and dependent clauses.

Proofreading Checklist

- Use a conventions checklist to catch minor errors.

Daily Editing Warm-Ups

- Provide targeted sentences that mimic common patterns of error.

Use of Sources:

Signal Phrase Sentence Frames

- Provide structured frames (e.g., “Source 1 explains…”) for students to practice integrated attribution.

Evidence–Reasoning Workshop

- Students practice adding immediate explanatory sentences after quoting or paraphrasing.

Counterargument Evidence Routine

- Teach students how to pair counterarguments with the strongest opposing evidence and clear rebuttal.