Grade 7 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Meets

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: 4

The essay presents a clear claim in favor of foreign language instruction and provides three consistent reasons. The argument is well organized with understandable logic, and the writer uses personal reasoning and some relevant real-world examples. However, the essay does not incorporate source material, contains some inaccuracies, and relies heavily on personal opinion rather than evidence-based explanation. Reasoning is present but could be more developed and more tightly connected to factual support. Overall, the ideas are clear, relevant, and purposeful, but lacking the depth and accuracy required for a higher score.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is stated clearly in the introduction: "I strongly believe that a student should be provided with the opportunity to learn a foreign language." ○ Restated directly in the conclusion: "learning a foreign language should be required." ○ Purpose remains consistent throughout, with no drift away from the argument.	➢ **Strengthen Your Claim by Including a Brief Preview** ○ Add a sentence in the introduction identifying your three main reasons to improve clarity and signal structure.
✓ **Relevant Reasons (But No Source Evidence)** ○ Three clear reasons are provided: ▪ Expands the student's mind ("opens the mind up to a whole other world… traditions, celebrations, food, or even the music"). ▪ Improves future career options ("if a student is able to speak the language of their patient…"). ▪ Gives an advantage when applying for jobs ("the student who is bilingual most likely will get the job"). ○ These reasons are relevant and accurate in general but not drawn from the assigned sources, resulting in missed opportunities for stronger support.	➢ **Integrate Accurate Source Evidence** ○ Include specific facts (e.g., young children learn languages quickly, cognitive benefits, higher test performance) to strengthen credibility and accuracy.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Explanations are extended and concrete (joining cultures, patient–provider communication, résumé advantages). ○ Personal and real-world examples help illustrate the points. ○ However, reasoning is often based on opinion rather than evidence: ▪ "They become part of that culture," ▪ "Many adults wish they had the opportunity," ▪ "You will lose a patient if you don't understand them." ○ Lacks academic grounding available in the sources (e.g., grammar awareness, cognitive advantages, test score data).	➢ **Deepen Reasoning With More Precise Explanations** ○ Explain *why* learning a new language leads to cultural understanding, *how* bilingual skills improve medical communication, and *why* employers value bilingual workers.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays consistently on topic; each paragraph supports the central argument. ○ Paragraphs remain relevant and consistent, but some repetition appears ("three reasons why I believe…" appears twice). ○ No counterargument or rebuttal included (a requirement in this task).	➢ **Address a Counterargument and Respond With Evidence** ○ Acknowledge concerns from Source 3 (scheduling, student confusion) and rebut them using stronger evidence from Sources 1 and 4.

Organization: 4

The essay has a clear introduction, three distinct body paragraphs aligned to three reasons, and a conclusion that restates the main point. The structure is easy to follow, transitions are present, and ideas generally progress logically. The main weakness is the absence of a counterargument section required by the task, and some transitions could better clarify relationships among ideas.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction That Frames the Argument** ○ Starts with a clear statement of belief: "I strongly believe that a student should be provided with the opportunity to learn a foreign language." ○ Establishes purpose without previewing reasons.	➢ **Add a Preview Sentence in the Introduction** ○ Briefly list your three reasons so readers understand the organization ahead of time.
✓ **Logical Paragraph Sequencing** ○ Organizes the three reasons into separate paragraphs: ▪ cultural connection ▪ career communication (patient example) ▪ job-market advantage ○ This makes the argument easy to follow.	➢ **Refine Paragraph Focus** ○ Ensure each paragraph includes a clear central idea with tightly connected supporting details.
✓ **Functional Transitions** ○ Uses transitions such as "A second reason," "Lastly," which support clarity. ○ These transitions are basic and could be more analytically purposeful.	➢ **Use More Purposeful Transitions** ○ Replace basic transitions with more relationship-focused ones ("Furthermore," "In contrast," "This demonstrates that…").

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Conclusion Provides Closure** ○ Restates the claim and summarizes thinking: "I strongly believe that learning a foreign language should be required."	➢
✓ **Missing Required Counterargument Structure** ○ The task requires addressing the opposing viewpoint; this section is absent, affecting completeness.	➢ **Include a Counterargument Paragraph** ○ Address concerns about scheduling, confusion, or curriculum load from Source 3, then rebut using strong evidence.

Voice: 4

The voice is sincere, confident, and appropriate for persuasion. The writer demonstrates enthusiasm for language learning and uses a clear, supportive tone. Occasional conversational phrasing and overgeneralization reduce authority, but the voice still effectively communicates purpose.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Engaged and Purposeful Tone** ○ Uses statements like "This opens the student's mind up to a whole other world…" showing commitment.	➢ **Use a More Academic and Precise Tone** ○ Replace conversational or exaggerated statements with evidence-based language.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Consistently addresses the issue as something "students should be provided with," signaling understanding of a school-board audience.	➢ **Strengthen Formal Voice for the Audience** ○ Use more authoritative phrasing appropriate for addressing the school board.
✓ **Occasional Informal or General Language** ○ Uses broad claims such as "you will lose a patient if you don't understand them," which weaken academic tone.	➢ **Reduce Broad Generalizations** ○ Add specificity to claims about communication or the job market.
✓ **Positive and Motivational Voice** ○ Ends with a decisive statement: "learning a foreign language should be required."	➢ **Balance Emotion With Evidence** ○ Maintain sincerity while grounding claims in the research from the sources.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is generally clear and purposeful, with some moments of vivid and meaningful phrasing. However, certain parts rely on general language or exaggeration. With more precise academic terminology and less repetition, this trait would score higher.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Clear, Accessible Vocabulary** ○ Uses phrases like "connect with their own culture," "whole other world," "advantage over other applicants."	➢ **Vary Word Choice to Avoid Repetition** ○ Diversify phrasing around cultural and career benefits.
✓ **Attempts at Specificity** ○ Refers to medical settings and job applications to give concrete examples.	➢ **Use Vocabulary From the Sources** ○ Incorporate words like "test performance," "metalinguistic awareness," "global communication."

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Some Vague or Overgeneralized Language** ○ "You will lose a patient if you don't understand them" and "many adults wish…" are broad, unsupported claims.	➢ **Eliminate Exaggerated Statements** ○ Replace broad claims with accurate, source-supported language.
✓ **Opportunities for More Academic Precision** ○ Omits terminology from the sources (e.g., "cognitive benefits," "language structure," "global economy").	➢ **Use More Domain-Specific Vocabulary** ○ Add terms like "language proficiency," "bilingual advantage," "cognitive flexibility."

Sentence Fluency: 4

Sentences are clear and readable, with generally smooth flow. Some sentences are long or repetitive, but overall fluency supports the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Mostly Varied Sentence Structures** ○ Uses simple and compound sentences effectively.	➢ **Read Aloud to Improve Flow** ○ Identify and revise repetitive or awkwardly paced sentences.
✓ **Readable, Logical Flow** ○ Ideas connect in a way that is easy to follow from paragraph to paragraph.	➢ **Use More Internal Transitions** ○ Add transitions such as "as a result," "for example," or "specifically."
✓ **Some Repetitive Patterns** ○ Sentences often begin with "This" or "A second reason," creating predictable rhythm.	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings** ○ Start some sentences with introductory phrases or clauses for smoother rhythm.
✓ **A Few Long or Loosely Connected Sentences** ○ Certain sentences include multiple ideas that could be separated for clarity.	➢ **Break Up Long Sentences** ○ Separate multi-idea sentences into clearer, shorter statements.

Conventions: 4

The writing demonstrates control of sentence boundaries, punctuation, and spelling. A few minor errors appear but do not impede understanding.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Correct Spelling and Grammar** ○ Words like "opportunity," "advantage," and "cultures" are spelled correctly.	➢ **Proofread for Subtle Errors** ○ Look for small punctuation adjustments that improve clarity.
✓ **Appropriate Punctuation Use** ○ Uses periods, commas, and apostrophes correctly in most places.	➢ **Review Comma Placement** ○ Add commas after introductory phrases and between independent clauses.
✓ **Minor Errors Appear** ○ Occasional missing comma or minor capitalization issue ("learning a foreign language should be required." capital "learning" optional). ○ No run-ons or fragments that obscure meaning.	➢ **Check Capitalization Consistency** ○ Ensure proper nouns and sentence starts are consistently capitalized.
✓ **Generally Strong Readability** ○ Conventions support clarity.	➢ **Maintain Strong Sentence Boundaries** ○ Ensure each idea remains complete and well-punctuated.

Use of Sources: 2

The essay does not use the required sources at all. All reasoning is based on personal opinion, hypothetical examples, or general observations. As a result, the argument lacks the factual grounding expected for this task. Evidence use is minimal and unsupported by the provided articles.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **No Direct Use of Sources** ○ No quotations, paraphrases, or accuracy from Sources 1, 2, 3, or 4.	➢ **Use Sources to Build a Rebuttal** ○ Incorporate evidence from Source 3 to acknowledge and respond to concerns.
✓ **Reasoning Not Supported by Factual Evidence** ○ Claims such as "you will lose a patient if you don't understand them" are not supported by source material.	➢ **Correct Claims Using Source Facts** ○ Replace unsupported or exaggerated statements with accurate paraphrases.
✓ **Missed Opportunities to Integrate Strong Evidence** ○ Sources contain relevant information on cognitive development, test scores, job market data, and scheduling concerns.	➢ **Add Accurate Source Evidence** ○ Use facts from Source 4 about grammar awareness and academic benefits. ○ Use a detail from Source 1 about employment advantages.
✓ **Lack of Attribution** ○ With no source use, there are no attribution phrases or accurate references.	➢ **Include Explicit Attribution** ○ Use signal phrases like "According to Source 4…" or "Source 1 explains…"

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:

Source Integration Mini-Lesson

- Teach students how to blend source texts into their reasoning using signal phrases ("According to Source 4…").

Evidence–Reasoning Practice Routines

- Students pair each claim with a source-based piece of evidence and a follow-up explanation connecting it directly to the argument.

Counterargument and Rebuttal Workshop

- Students practice responding to concerns using evidence from the assigned sources.

Organization:

Counterargument Frame Modeling

- Provide students with templates to add a concession and rebuttal paragraph.

Transition Function Mini-Lesson

- Explicitly teach how transitions communicate relationships (cause/effect, example, emphasis).

Paragraph-Purpose Mapping

- Have students map each paragraph's main claim to ensure alignment and focus.

Voice:

Tone Calibration Exercises

- Compare informal vs. formal versions of the same sentence.

Audience-Specific Revision Practice

- Revise sentences to fit the expectations of professional or civic decision-makers.

Evidence-Backed Voice Strategy

- Teach students to anchor emotional statements in source-based facts.

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 Workshops

- Students practice revising vague words into precise academic terms.

Language Learning Vocabulary Banks

- Build word lists directly from the sources to support stronger academic phrasing.

Connotation and Precision Lessons

- Teach how word choice affects tone, precision, and persuasiveness.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence-Opening Variety Charts

- Students highlight repeated sentence starters and revise.

Combining/Splitting Activities

- Teach students to adjust pacing by combining or dividing sentences.

Fluency Read-Aloud Routine

- Students read aloud to hear their own rhythm and improve it.

Conventions:

Comma Mini-Lessons

- Practice with introductory commas and conjunction comma rules.

Targeted Editing Stations

- Students rotate through stations correcting capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Proofreading Checklists

- Students use a checklist to catch subtle or repeated errors.

Use of Sources:

Source Integration Modeling

- Demonstrate how to pull evidence directly from the articles.

Evidence–Analysis Pair Practice

- Students practice pairing source details with explanation sentences.

Rebuttal Using Sources Workshop

- Students learn how to use source information to strengthen refutation.