Grade 7 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 2

The writer attempts to argue that foreign language instruction should be included in elementary schools, but the ideas are underdeveloped, repetitively stated, and unsupported by the required sources. The claim appears inconsistently, reasons lack clarity, and the essay relies heavily on general opinions and personal statements rather than accurate, source-based evidence. With limited explanation and frequent drift into unsupported assertions, the argument does not yet demonstrate grade-level depth or accuracy.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose (Partially Met)** ○ The claim appears near the end: "learning a second language is almost important so I think there should be second language classes in elementary schools." ○ Earlier paragraphs do not clearly establish the claim; the purpose becomes clearer only in the conclusion.	➢ **State Your Claim Clearly at the Beginning** ○ Begin the introduction with a clear claim so your purpose is established early.
✓ **Relevant but Unsupported Reasons** ○ The writer provides general reasons such as: ▪ students "will understand more," ▪ it "helps in future jobs," ▪ kids "don't have to wait until they are in high school." ○ These reasons are loosely connected to the topic but not drawn from the required sources, reducing accuracy and credibility.	➢ **Use Accurate Evidence From the Sources** ○ Include details such as cognitive benefits (Source 4), job-market advantages (Source 1), or concerns about scheduling (Source 3). ○ Replace unsupported statements with specific, accurate facts.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation (Weak)** ○ Ideas are often stated without explanation: "You can get a job speaking a different language," "they will understand more." ○ No detail is provided about *how* language learning supports understanding, employment, or early success. ○ Several reasons remain vague or incorrect: ▪ "If no one speaks English the kids won't understand them at the school." ▪ "Learning it faster helps later on when they grow up learning other things." ○ No counterargument is acknowledged or rebutted.	➢ **Explain Your Reasoning More Deeply** ○ After each reason, add a sentence explaining *why* that point matters or *how* it supports your claim.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ The essay stays loosely connected to the topic, but sections drift into generalities about jobs or communication without linking back to the claim. ○ Central ideas repeat rather than deepen ("they will understand more," "they will know more things"). ○ The conclusion restates the claim but does not synthesize key reasons.	➢ **Stay Focused and Avoid Repetition** ○ Replace repeated general statements with new, detailed examples or explanations.

Organization: 2

The essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion, but the structure lacks clarity and logical sequencing. Ideas repeat across paragraphs, transitions are minimal, and the argument does not build effectively. A required counterargument section is missing. Overall, the organizational structure needs clearer direction and purpose.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Weak Introduction With No Clear Preview** ○ Opens with vague statements: "Learning a second language can be important to kids… they can learn more faster." ○ No clear claim or preview of reasons.	➢ **Add a Clear Claim + Reason Preview in the Introduction** ○ Include a sentence such as: "There are three reasons why elementary schools should offer foreign language instruction…"
✓ **Ideas Not Clearly Grouped or Sequenced** ○ Paragraphs repeat similar ideas: ▪ "they will understand more," ▪ "they will learn a lot faster," ▪ "kids learn faster when they are younger." ○ No clear progression between reasons.	➢ **Organize Ideas Into Distinct Paragraphs by Reason** ○ Group all ideas about learning speed into one paragraph, job benefits into another, etc.
✓ **Transitions Are Minimal** ○ Paragraphs start abruptly with little connection to prior information.	➢ **Use Transitions That Show Relationships** ○ Add transitions like "One important reason," "Another benefit," "In contrast," or "This shows that…"

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Conclusion Restates Claim but Lacks Synthesis** ○ States, "I think there should be second language classes… kids are able to learn more," without summarizing or advancing the argument.	➢
✓ **Missing Counterargument Section** ○ Task requires addressing opposing viewpoints using Source 3.	➢ **Include a Counterargument Paragraph** ○ Address concerns from Source 3 and explain why the benefits outweigh the challenges.

Voice: 2

The writer's voice is sincere but inconsistent. Tone is conversational, repetitive, and sometimes uncertain. Audience awareness is limited, and the argument lacks the authority expected when addressing a school board.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Sincere but Repetitive Tone** ○ Statements such as "they will understand more," "they will learn more," and "they will learn more faster" repeat without development.	➢ **Reduce Repetitive Statements** ○ Introduce new supporting explanations rather than repeating the same ideas.
✓ **Conversational or Informal Language** ○ Phrases like "they can learn more faster," "they don't have to wait," and "it will help in jobs" lack academic tone.	➢ **Shift to a More Academic Tone** ○ Replace informal phrasing with precise vocabulary appropriate for civic decision-making.
✓ **Audience Awareness Is Not Well Established** ○ No reference to decision-makers, benefits to the school, or broader community implications.	➢ **Increase Audience Awareness** ○ Address the school board directly and explain why your argument matters for the community.
✓ **Voice Lacks Persuasive Confidence** ○ Uses tentative phrasing like "learning a second language is almost important."	➢ **Strengthen Confidence in Your Claims** ○ Use assertive phrasing supported by evidence ("Research shows that…").

Word Choice: 2

Word choice is simple, repetitive, and often imprecise. The essay lacks academic vocabulary, and several statements rely on general or vague wording rather than clear, specific language.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Repetitive Vocabulary** ○ Frequent repetition of "learn faster," "learn more," "understand more," without adding clarity.	➢ **Avoid Repetitive Phrasing** ○ Vary sentence wording and introduce new details.
✓ **General or Vague Language** ○ Statements such as "helps in jobs" and "learn more things" lack specificity.	➢ **Replace Vague Words With Clear Descriptions** ○ Instead of "learn more," explain *what* students will learn and *how* they benefit.
✓ **Missing Academic and Domain-Specific Words** ○ No use of key terms such as "bilingual," "language proficiency," "cognitive development," "communication skills."	➢ **Incorporate Language From the Articles** ○ Borrow terminology directly from sources to strengthen accuracy.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Opportunities for Precision Missed** ○ Evidence about grammar awareness, memory benefits, and global communication is not used.	➢ **Add Precise Vocabulary From the Sources** ○ Use words like "bilingual," "proficiency," "cognitive flexibility," and "global communication."

Sentence Fluency: 2

Sentences are often repetitive in structure, sometimes incomplete, and lacking a sense of rhythm. Several sentences are overly short or simplistic, and transitions between ideas are limited.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Patterns** ○ Many sentences begin with "They will," "This will," "Kids," or "Learning."	➢ **Vary Sentence Beginnings** ○ Start with prepositional phrases, transitions, or dependent clauses.
✓ **Simple, Short Sentences** ○ "Kids learn faster when they are younger." ○ "That helps in future jobs." ○ "Kids don't have to wait."	➢ **Read Aloud to Improve Rhythm** ○ Identify choppy or repetitive sections by hearing the flow.
✓ **Limited Use of Complex Structures** ○ Very few sentences combine ideas or show relationships.	➢ **Add More Complex Sentences** ○ Combine related ideas to create smoother flow.
✓ **Weak Transitions Between Ideas** ○ Sentences often shift abruptly without linking phrases.	➢ **Include Clear Transitions** ○ Add connecting phrases like "as a result," "in addition," or "for example."

Conventions: 2

Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence boundaries affect clarity. Errors do not obscure meaning but distract from the writing.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Errors** ○ "ther," "therefor," "lear," "famly," "beter," "therefor" appear across the draft.	➢ **Check Spelling Carefully With a Checklist** ○ Correct frequently misspelled words before submitting.
✓ **Punctuation Issues** ○ Missing commas in complex sentences. ○ Some fused or run-on sentences.	➢ **Review Punctuation Rules** ○ Use commas correctly in complex and compound sentences.
✓ **Capitalization Errors** ○ Inconsistent capitalization at the start of sentences.	➢ **Correct Capitalization Consistently** ○ Ensure every sentence begins with a capital letter.
✓ **Sentence Boundary Problems** ✓ • Several sentences are fragments or run-ons: ▪ "Kids learn faster when they are younger and that." ▪ "That helps in future jobs."	➢ **Fix Run-Ons and Fragments** ○ Add periods and conjunctions where needed.

Use of Sources: 1

The essay does not use any evidence from the required sources. Assertions are based entirely on personal opinion without factual grounding. Misunderstandings of the task and lack of attribution significantly reduce the effectiveness of the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **No Use of Sources** ○ No quotations, paraphrases, or factual statements from Sources 1–4.	➢ **Add Accurate Source Evidence** ○ Use details from Source 4 (cognitive development) and Source 1 (employment advantages).
✓ **Unsupported Claims** ○ "Learning it faster helps later on," ○ "Kids will understand more," ○ "That helps with getting a job," are unsupported and vague.	➢ **Replace Unsupported Claims With Factual Statements** ○ Ground your argument in research rather than assumptions.
✓ **No Attribution Phrases** ○ No "According to Source __" or references to the texts.	➢ **Include Explicit Attribution** ○ Use phrases such as "Source 1 explains…" to identify where evidence comes from.
✓ **Missing Counterargument and Rebuttal** ○ No use of Source 3's concerns or responses drawn from other sources.	➢ **Use Sources to Build a Counterargument** ○ Address Source 3's concerns and rebut with stronger 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 Framing & Preview Mini-Lesson

- Practice writing clear, first-paragraph claims with a preview of reasons to improve purpose and focus.

Source-Evidence Accuracy Routine

- Guide students in selecting and paraphrasing evidence directly from the sources using sentence frames ("According to Source 4…").

Reasoning Expansion Practice

- Use structured prompts ("This matters because…," "This shows that…") to help students connect ideas back to the argument.

Organization:

Paragraph-Purpose Mapping

- Students identify the main purpose of each paragraph and reorganize ideas for clarity.

Transition Function Mini-Lesson

- Teach transitions that show cause/effect, contrast, clarification, or addition.

Counterargument Modeling

- Provide frames for concession and rebuttal (e.g., "Some people are concerned… however…").

Voice:

Tone Calibration With Mentor Texts

- Compare conversational writing to model argumentative letters.

Audience-Driven Revision Exercises

- Students rewrite passages to make them more professional and persuasive.

Purposeful Voice Mini-Lesson

- Teach how to convey confidence using fact-based reasoning.

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 Word Choice Lessons

- Students revise vague or repetitive wording into more precise academic language.

Vocabulary Word Banks From Sources

- Build a class bank of essential terms for argumentative writing.

Modeling Precision

- Teacher models sentence-level revisions to increase accuracy.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Variety Mapping

- Students highlight repeated starting words and revise for variety.

Sentence Combining/Splitting Workshops

- Provide practice with restructuring simple or run-on sentences.

Transition Types Mini-Lesson

- Teach transitions categorized by purpose (cause/effect, contrast, addition).

Conventions:

Spelling Pattern Mini-Lessons

- Target common spelling mistakes across drafts.

Sentence Boundary Practice

- Use worksheets focused on correcting run-ons and fragments.

Proofreading Stations

- Students practice editing for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Use of Sources:

Evidence Integration Modeling

- Demonstrate how to incorporate quotations and paraphrases from the sources.

Evidence–Explanation Pairing Practice

- Students connect each source detail with an explanatory sentence.

Counterargument Construction Workshop

- Teach students to use Source 3 for concession and Sources 1 or 4 for rebuttal.