Grade 8 – Argumentative Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about the human nervous system and the brain. You are given three articles about the brain and how it impacts memory.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an explanatory article** about improving memory. Using more than one source, select the most relevant information to support your thesis/controlling idea about memory.*

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

Ideas and Content: 5

The writer presents a clear, well-supported claim to eliminate the penny and uses multiple accurate, relevant pieces of evidence from the sources. The essay demonstrates strong understanding of both the economic arguments and consumer-cost concerns. Explanations show insight, reasoning is generally strong, and a counterargument is effectively addressed with source-based rebuttal. Minor opportunities remain to deepen some explanations and clarify the connection between sentimental value and economic logic, but overall, the ideas are accurate, well developed, and persuasive.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is explicit from the introduction: ▪ "It has now become more evident that the penny is more of a nuisance than an item of transaction." ○ The purpose—to argue for abolishing the penny is sustained throughout. ○ The conclusion reinforces the claim: ▪ "The elimination of the penny will help the economy greatly."	➢ **Add a Clear Preview Statement in the Introduction** ○ Identify your main economic reasons upfront to strengthen the essay's framing.
✓ **Relevant, Accurate Reasons & Evidence** ○ Uses Source 1 accurately: ▪ "Because the penny costs more than a cent to produce, the Treasury loses more than $100 million per year…" ○ Uses Source 3 accurately: ▪ "A penny currently costs the United States government 2.4 cents to mint." ○ Uses expert evidence from Source 1 (Jeff Gore): ▪ "…each of us on average wastes 2.4 hours per year… costing nearly $50 a year." ○ Uses Source 3 again for consumer prices: ▪ "Rounded prices should not cost extra money and may even lead to lower prices… something worth 99 cents may drop to 95 cents…" ○ Evidence is well chosen, accurate, and supports the writer's reasoning.	➢ **Deepen Explanation in Key Areas** ○ Provide a bit more detail about *why* sentimental value does not outweigh economic concerns.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Strong explanation of the manufacturing cost problem: ▪ "This quote demonstrates the enormous price of manufacturing pennies as opposed to its value and worth." ○ Explains why pennies waste time for consumers: ▪ Describes counting change, handling transactions, and penny jars. ○ Explains rebuttal reasoning: ▪ Uses economist perspectives to challenge fears of price increases. ○ A few explanations could be more precise (e.g., sentimental value paragraph is general), but reasoning is mostly clear and connected.	➢ **Clarify the Link Between Evidence and Reasoning** ○ Strengthen explanation after the Jeff Gore statistic by elaborating on how penny-handling affects consumers and retailers.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Constantly returns to the central argument: the penny is costly, inefficient, outdated. ○ Counterargument section is tightly connected to the claim. ○ No major drift; all paragraphs support the argument and build logically toward the conclusion.	➢ **Add More Precision in Some Transitions** ○ Use transitions that highlight cause/effect or contrast ("as a result," "in contrast to sentimental value").

Organization: 5

The essay is well structured with a clear introduction, logically sequenced reasons, a purposeful counterargument section, and a strong conclusion. Transitions are smooth and guide the reader through the argument. Paragraphs stay focused and build logically, creating a cohesive and persuasive progression of ideas.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear, Focused Introduction** ○ Establishes context for the argument and states the claim clearly: the penny has become a "nuisance."	➢ **Add a Brief Preview Sentence in the Introduction** ○ Identify the main economic reasons early to strengthen organizational clarity.
✓ **Logical Sequencing of Ideas** ○ Moves through arguments in a well-planned order: ▪ cost to government ▪ inefficiency and wasted time ▪ price rounding concerns ▪ sentimental value ▪ counterargument and rebuttal ○ Each paragraph adds a new layer to the argument.	➢ **Strengthen Paragraph Focus** ○ Ensure each paragraph has a clear central idea, especially in sections combining sentimental value and economic logic.
✓ **Strong Use of Transitions** ○ Uses purposeful transitions ("To begin with," "Moreover," "Nevertheless," "However") that show relationships between ideas.	➢ **Tighten Paragraph Transitions Even Further** ○ Use transitions that highlight cause/effect ("as a result," "consequently").

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Effective Counterargument Section** ○ Addresses concerns about rounding and price increases using Source 3 and offers a clear rebuttal.	➢
✓ **Purposeful Conclusion** ○ Reinforces main points and emphasizes benefits of eliminating the penny: "The elimination of the penny will help the economy greatly."	➢ **Expand the Conclusion Slightly** ○ Add a synthesis sentence that connects all the reasons more explicitly.

Voice: 4

The writer maintains a mostly confident and persuasive tone suited to an educated audience. The voice is professional, controlled, and generally consistent. Some sections drift slightly into repetitive or general statements, especially when discussing sentimental value, but the voice overall supports the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Confident, Persuasive Tone** ○ Uses strong language such as "It has now become more evident…" and "unnecessary burden on consumers."	➢ **Use More Purposeful Language in Rebuttal** ○ Add more explicit phrasing to address concerns ("Critics argue… however, the evidence shows…").
✓ **Consistent Audience Awareness** ○ Arguments are framed around logical, economic concerns appropriate for decision-makers.	➢ **Enhance Authoritative Voice With More Attribution** ○ Strengthen credibility by referencing sources explicitly in areas where reasoning relies on inference.
✓ **Professional and Controlled Style** ○ Maintains formal tone without being overly emotional.	➢ **Increase Precision in Key Claims** ○ Strengthen academic tone by reducing general statements about sentiment.
✓ **Minor Repetition or General Statements** ○ Sentimental value section uses broader language and less specific reasoning, slightly weakening tone precision.	➢ **Avoid Repetitive Framing** ○ Replace repeated sentence patterns with varied, authoritative constructions.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is generally precise, academic, and well-suited to an argumentative piece. Most phrasing strengthens clarity and persuasiveness. Some opportunities exist to use even more specific economic vocabulary, but overall, word choice is effective.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Strong Academic Vocabulary** ○ Uses terms such as "manufactured," "transaction," "burden," and "alternative." ○ Employs economic language ("costs more than a cent to produce," "price rounding concerns").	➢ **Integrate Source Terminology** ○ Include additional vocabulary from the sources (e.g., "profit margin," "minting losses").

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Clear, Meaningful Phrasing** ○ "Unnecessary burden on consumers" ○ "Outweigh the cost of keeping the penny in circulation"	➢ **Eliminate Broad or Vague Phrasing** ○ Replace general statements with more targeted analysis.
✓ **A Few General or Repetitive Phrases** ○ Sentimental value section uses broader language ("many people cherish the penny") lacking precision.	➢ **Vary Word Choice in Repetitive Sections** ○ Use synonyms or reframe ideas to avoid repeating "cost" or "burden."
✓ **Opportunities to Add More Technical Language** ○ Could integrate terms like "net cost," "commodity price," or "inflation-adjusted value."	➢ **Increase Specific Economic Vocabulary** ○ Strengthen precision by adding terms related to cost analysis or economic impact.

Sentence Fluency: 4

The essay demonstrates generally smooth flow, varied sentence structures, and appropriate pacing. A few sentences are lengthy or densely packed, but overall fluency supports clarity and persuasiveness.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Variety of Sentence Structures** ○ Effective mix of simple, compound, and complex sentences throughout.	➢ **Use Read-Aloud Editing** ○ Identify sections where pacing seems rushed or overly dense.
✓ **Strong Transitions That Help Flow** ○ Uses phrases like "To begin with," "Moreover," and "However" to maintain coherence.	➢ **Strengthen Intra-Paragraph Transitions** ○ Add more subtle connectors ("for instance," "in particular").
✓ **Occasional Lengthy or Overloaded Sentences** ○ Some sentences combine several ideas, making them slightly dense.	➢ **Break Up Overly Long Sentences** ○ Split multi-idea sentences into two clearer statements.
✓ **Minor Repetition in Sentence Beginnings** ○ A few paragraphs repeat transition openings, though this does not significantly hinder flow.	➢ **Increase Variety in Sentence Openings** ○ Use prepositional phrases or adverbial clauses to diversify rhythm.

Conventions: 4

The essay demonstrates solid command of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Minor improvements could make it even stronger, but meaning is always clear and the writing is consistently readable.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Grammar** ○ No significant errors in common academic vocabulary.	➢ **Maintain Attention to Accuracy** ○ Current conventions are excellent—continue strong editing habits.
✓ **Effective Punctuation Use** ○ Commas and periods used appropriately in most complex sentences.	➢ **Review Comma Placement in Complex Sentences** ○ Add commas before dependent clauses where needed.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Minor Improvements Possible** ○ A few long sentences could use clearer punctuation for readability.	➢ **Proofread for Small Punctuation Adjustments** ○ Especially in longer sentences.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No confusing run-ons or fragments.	➢ **Check for Subtle Grammar Improvements** ○ Review parallel structure and pronoun clarity.

Use of Sources: 5

The essay integrates multiple sources accurately and effectively. Evidence is well selected, clearly attributed, and thoroughly explained. Counterargument evidence is incorporated accurately, showing a high level of source comprehension.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate and Relevant Evidence From Multiple Sources** ○ Source 3: "A penny currently costs the United States government 2.4 cents to mint." ○ Source 1: Jeff Gore's efficiency quote ("wastes 2.4 hours per year… costing $50"). ○ Source 3: Consumer price-rounding effects. ○ Source 1: Loss of more than $100 million per year for minting.	➢ **Balance Evidence Across All Sources** ○ Consider adding one detail from Source 2 to increase range.
✓ **Strong Explanation After Evidence** ○ The writer explains *why* these facts matter: increased costs, wasted time, inefficiency.	➢ **Explain Complex Concepts More Deeply** ○ Briefly elaborate on why price rounding might lead to lower prices.
✓ **Clear Attribution** ○ Uses phrases such as "according to Jeff Gore" or integrates the data in context.	➢ **Add Attribution to All Evidence** ○ Add explicit signal phrases to a few paraphrases for consistency.
✓ **Effective Use of Counterargument Evidence** ○ Acknowledges concerns about increased prices, then uses economists' perspectives to rebut the claim.	➢ **Provide Additional Counterargument Detail** ○ Expand slightly on how source-based evidence disproves rounding fears.

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 Chain Routine

- Teach students to always follow evidence with a deeper "why this matters" statement to strengthen reasoning.

Counterargument + Rebuttal Modeling

- Use this piece as an example to show how effective rebuttal requires both acknowledgment and strong evidence-based response.

Precision-Reasoning Mini-Lesson

- Model how to move from statements like "this shows…" to more detailed causal explanation.

Organization:

Reason Preview Modeling

- Model thesis paragraphs with concise previews of key reasons.

Transition Function Lessons

- Teach students how to use transitions to show contrast, cause/effect, and elaboration.

Conclusion Synthesis Workshop

- Students practice writing conclusions that unify key arguments rather than simply restating them.

Voice:

Tone Calibration Using Mentor Texts

- Students compare drafts to polished argumentative editorials.

Audience-Driven Revision Exercises

- Practice rewriting sentences to align tone with civic decision-making.

Authoritative Voice Modeling

- Teach how to blend factual evidence with strong, declarative statements.

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 Expansion Activities

- Create word banks for economic and financial terminology.

Replace-and-Refine Practice

- Students revise vague or repetitive language into precise academic phrasing.

Semantic Precision Mini-Lesson

- Teach how subtle shifts in vocabulary impact tone and clarity.

Sentence Fluency:

Combining and Splitting Workshop

- Help students see how sentence boundaries affect pacing and clarity.

Sentence Opening Variety Exercises

- Students revise repeated sentence starters to enhance fluency.

Fluency Read-Aloud Routine

- Students read drafts aloud to improve rhythm and clarity.

Conventions:

Comma & Clause Workshops

- Focus on advanced comma usage in dependent clause structures.

Editing Stations

- Students review punctuation, spelling, and grammar in targeted exercises.

Conventions Checklist

- Use a detailed checklist for final drafting.

Use of Sources:

Evidence–Reasoning Pair Practice

- Strengthen connection between each quote and its explanation.

Signal Phrase Mini-Lesson

- Provide templates for consistent attribution.

Counterargument Evidence Workshop

- Teach students how to use multiple sources to strengthen rebuttal sections.