Grade 8 – Argumentative Writing Work Sample: Meets

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: 4

The writer presents a clear, well-supported claim arguing for abolishing the penny and uses multiple accurate pieces of evidence from the sources. The economic reasons are solid, explanations are generally strong, and the argument stays focused. A counterargument is included and partially addressed, though the rebuttal could be stronger and more precise. Minor weaknesses in explanation depth and the sentimental-value paragraph prevent the paper from reaching the highest level, but overall it demonstrates strong understanding and purposeful development.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is direct and appears in the opening sentence: "I believe that the penny should be abolished…" ○ Purpose remains consistent throughout and is reinforced in the conclusion.	➢ **Add a Brief Preview of Your Main Reasons in the Introduction** ○ Identify the three key economic reasons upfront to strengthen clarity.
✓ **Relevant, Accurate Reasons & Evidence** ○ Source-accurate production cost evidence: ▪ "the US actually loses about $100 million a year due to the cost of the metals…" (From Sources 1 and 3.) Accurate use of Jeff Gore's data: ▪ "the average person spends 2.4 hours fiddling with pennies at store counters every year… could mean $50 dollars lost each year." ○ Accurate recognition that rounding can go *down* as well as up: ▪ "Maybe they haven't thought about the possibility that prices would round down." (Matches economist analysis in Source 3.) ○ These are relevant, accurate, and strongly connected to the economic focus of the prompt.	➢

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Ideas and Content
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Reasoning explains why production cost matters: pennies are not used, often lost, and waste government funds. ○ Explains why inefficiency matters: time lost at store counters becomes financial loss across millions of transactions. ○ Attempts to expand on rounding benefit with consumer examples. ○ The sentimental value paragraph is less developed and shifts from economic evidence to emotional commentary ("iconic pieces of history"). ○ Reasoning could be deeper in places (e.g., "this could cost people time away from their job" is overstated).	➢ **Deepen Reasoning in Key Areas** ○ Explain more precisely *how* and *why* rounding may save consumers money beyond just "four cents."
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays focused on economic arguments for eliminating the penny. ○ Counterargument about rounding is appropriate and relevant. ○ The charity and sentimental-value paragraph loses some focus and does not use source evidence. ○ No sections drift completely off topic, and overall cohesiveness is maintained.	➢ **Strengthen the Counterargument and Rebuttal** ○ Use Source 3 more explicitly to show how rounding rules work and why fears of price increases are exaggerated. ➢ **Improve the Sentimental/Charity Paragraph** ○ Either connect it more clearly to your economic argument or reduce it so it doesn't weaken focus.

Organization: 4

The essay is well structured, with a clear introduction, distinct body paragraphs, a counterargument section, and a conclusion. Ideas generally build logically, and transitions help maintain coherence. A few sections (particularly the sentimental-value paragraph) weaken the organizational focus because they drift from the economic structure of the argument, but the overall organization is strong and effective.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction Establishes Claim** ○ Opens with a direct claim: "I believe that the penny should be abolished." ○ Provides context for the argument.	➢ **Add a Brief Preview in the Introduction** ○ Outline your three key economic reasons early to clarify structure.
✓ **Logical Sequencing Across Paragraphs** ○ Presents reasons in a coherent order: ▪ production cost ▪ time inefficiency ▪ rounding concerns and counterargument ▪ sentimental considerations (less aligned) ○ The first three paragraphs create a strong logical flow.	➢

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Organization
✓ **Transitions Support Clarity** ○ Uses clear transitions ("Another big argument…," "But sure enough…," "However…") to connect ideas.	➢ **Strengthen Internal Transitions** ○ Use transitions that highlight logical relationships ("as a result," "in contrast," "therefore").
✓ **Effective Counterargument Placement** ○ Introduces a common opposing argument (rounding up harms consumers) and responds with evidence.	➢ **Tighten the Counterargument-Rebuttal Section** ○ Make the rebuttal more explicit using Source 3's rounding rules.
✓ **Conclusion Provides Closure** ○ Restates and reinforces the argument with a confident final statement.	➢
✓ **Minor Organizational Weakness** ○ The sentimental-value paragraph interrupts the economic sequence and is not evidence-based, weakening cohesion.	➢ **Reposition or Refine the Sentimental-Value Paragraph** ○ Connect it more clearly to your argument or shorten it so it does not disrupt flow.

Voice: 4

The voice is confident, informed, and persuasive. Tone is mostly appropriate for a civic/economic topic. Occasional assumptions, exaggerations, or emotional phrasing slightly weaken the authority of the voice, but overall the writer sounds purposeful and engaged.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Voice
✓ **Confident Tone** ○ Uses clear, assertive statements: "I believe that the penny should be abolished."	➢ **Enhance Confidence Through Evidence** ○ Support confident tone with strong data rather than emotional phrasing.
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Frames concerns around government waste, consumer inefficiency, and economic reasoning.	➢ **Clarify Who the Audience Is** ○ Add references to policymakers, taxpayers, or economists to sharpen audience awareness.
✓ **Appropriate Persuasive Style** ○ Uses rhetorical emphasis ("that kind of money could go towards education…") effectively.	➢ **Use More Formal Academic Phrasing** ○ Strengthen authoritative tone by referencing sources more directly.
✓ **Minor Drift Into Emotional or Broad Claims** ○ Statements like "they might be losing a lot of money" or "a lot of people don't consider both sides" lack precision and weaken authority.	➢ **Remove or Revise Overly Broad Claims** ○ Replace general statements with precise evidence-based assertions.

Word Choice: 4

Word choice is generally clear, purposeful, and academic. The writer uses effective phrasing to articulate economic concerns and occasionally incorporates vivid language. Some general or vague wording appears in the sentimental-value section, but most of the essay shows strong vocabulary control.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Word Choice
✓ **Precise Economic Vocabulary** ○ Uses terms such as "production cost," "loses about $100 million," "raises the potential," "faster production," "transaction counters."	➢ **Increase Precision in Economic Descriptions** ○ Replace "a lot of money" with specific amounts or more exact phrasing.
✓ **Effective and Purposeful Phrasing** ○ "People waste time fiddling with pennies…" ○ "This could cost people time away from their job…"	➢ **Use More Terminology From the Sources** ○ Include phrases like "net loss to the Treasury," "consumer rounding neutrality."
✓ **Some Vague Language** ○ "Iconic pieces of history," "a big deal," and "a lot of money" lack specificity.	➢ **Avoid Vague or Emotional Vocabulary** ○ Use precise policy/economic terms instead of broad descriptors.
✓ **Occasional Exaggeration or Overgeneralization** ○ Overstates some impacts ("lose time away from their job"), which weakens precision.	➢ **Refine Overgeneralized Phrases** ○ Replace exaggerations with accurate statements supported by evidence.

Sentence Fluency: 4

The writing has a mostly smooth flow with a mix of simple, compound, and complex sentences. Some sentences are overly long or contain minor awkward phrasing, but overall fluency supports clarity and engagement.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Varied Sentence Structures** ○ Uses a blend of simple, compound, and complex sentences.	➢ **Increase Variation in Sentence Openings** ○ Use prepositional or adverbial openers for smoother rhythm.
✓ **Strong Use of Pacing and Transitions** ○ "However, some people still want to keep the penny…" ○ "But sure enough, the extra money could go towards…"	➢ **Check Transitions Within Paragraphs** ○ Add subtle connectors like "for example," "in particular," or "specifically."
✓ **Occasional Long or Dense Sentences** ○ Some sentences pack multiple ideas and could be divided for clarity.	➢ **Break Up Dense Sentences** ○ Split multi-idea sentences to improve pacing and clarity.
✓ **Minor Awkwardness in Phrasing** ○ Example: "This could cost people time away from their job" (slightly imprecise structure).	➢ **Refine Awkward Phrasing** ○ Adjust sentences to avoid unnecessary complexity.

Conventions: 4

Conventions are strong, with mainly correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Minor issues appear, but meaning is always clear, and readability remains high.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Conventions
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Standard Grammar** ○ No notable spelling errors; grammar is consistently correct.	➢ **Maintain Consistency** ○ Keep grammar and punctuation aligned with academic standards.
✓ **Mostly Effective Punctuation Use** ○ Commas used correctly in complex sentences for the most part.	➢ **Add Commas in Complex Sentences** ○ Reinforce punctuation in longer sentences beginning with dependent clauses.
✓ **Minor Issues** ○ Occasional sentences could benefit from additional commas or rephrasing for clarity.	➢ **Check for Minor Punctuation Errors** ○ Make small adjustments to improve clarity.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No major run-ons or fragments.	➢ **Proofread for Flow and Accuracy** ○ Continue strong editing habits demonstrated in this draft.

Use of Sources: 4

The essay uses multiple sources accurately (minting costs, time inefficiency, rounding neutrality). Evidence is well incorporated and generally explained. Attribution is occasionally indirect or incomplete, and the sentimental-value paragraph is not grounded in the texts, but overall source use is strong and accurate.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources	Student Recommendations for Improvement: Use of Sources
✓ **Accurate Use of Economic Cost Data (Source 1/3)** ○ "…the US actually loses about $100 million a year due to the cost of the metals…"—accurate.	➢ **Broaden Source Use Slightly** ○ Include an additional detail from Source 2 for greater depth.
✓ **Accurate Use of Jeff Gore's Time-Waste Data (Source 1)** ○ "2.4 hours… costing $50 dollars lost each year"—precise and correct.	➢
✓ **Correct Interpretation of Rounding Research (Source 3)** ○ Acknowledges rounding down as well as up, which matches economist analysis.	➢
✓ **Partially Effective Counterargument Support** ○ Addresses concerns but rebuttal could be strengthened with a direct quote or clearer attribution.	➢ **Strengthen Counterargument Rebuttal With Direct Evidence** ○ Incorporate a precise quote from economists in Source 3.
✓ **Limited Attribution Phrasing** ○ References evidence without consistent signal phrases ("According to Source 1…").	➢ **Add Explicit Attribution to Each Source-Based Idea** ○ Use clear phrases ("Source 3 states…") for consistency.
✓ **Sentimental/Charity Discussion Not Source-Based** ○ Includes claims not supported by the articles.	➢ **Ensure All Claims Are Source-Grounded** ○ Reduce or revise sentimental statements that lack textual support.

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–Reasoning Chain Practice

- Teach students to consistently add "This matters because…" after each source detail to deepen explanation.

Counterargument and Rebuttal Modeling

- Show how to pair opposing viewpoints with specific economic evidence from Source 3 to create stronger refutation.

Precision Revision Workshop

- Have students revise general statements ("save people time," "save them money") into more precise economic explanations using data.

Organization:

Thesis Preview Modeling

- Show students how to present a clear roadmap of reasons in the introduction.

Paragraph-Purpose Mapping

- Students identify which paragraphs directly support the economic argument.

Counterargument Organization Lesson

- Teach using frames that position the rebuttal clearly after the counterclaim.

Voice:

Tone Calibration Using Mentor Texts

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

Audience Lens Revision

- Students revise a paragraph specifically for a policy audience.

Evidence-Backed Voice Modeling

- Demonstrate linking declarative statements to research.

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:

Precision Vocabulary Mini-Lesson

- Teach students how specific economic terms strengthen clarity.

Replace-and-Refine Workshop

- Students revise vague phrases into precise academic language.

Source Vocabulary Banks

- Build shared lists of key terms from the Penny sources.

Sentence Fluency:

Sentence Combining/Splitting Practice

- Teach students how to adjust pacing with clear boundaries.

Fluency Read-Aloud Routine

- Students listen for awkward or overly long sentences.

Transition Ladder Activity

- Provide students with transitions categorized by purpose.

Conventions:

Advanced Comma Workshops

- Teach nuanced comma use for clarity.

Selective Editing Stations

- Students practice correcting conventions in teacher-selected excerpts.

Proofreading Checklists

- Provide systematic scaffolds for editing.

Use of Sources:

Signal Phrase Mini-Lesson

- Provide sentence frames for consistent attribution.

Evidence-Explanation Pair Practice

- Ensure students always follow evidence with clear reasoning.

Source Integration Workshop

- Practice weaving evidence from multiple sources into one argument.