Grade 6 – Argumentative Writing Work Sample: Approaching

Task: Your class is studying about the environment and recycling. You are given four sources about community service and recycling efforts.

*Read the sources carefully to **write an argumentative essay** in which you give your opinion about whether the school should agree to clean a section of a highway or host a technology recycling day as your school's community service project. Make sure you clearly state your opinion and write several paragraphs supporting your opinion with reasons and details from the sources.*

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

Ideas and Content: 3

The essay presents a clear position that communities should "put more trash cans around" and reduce litter by increasing disposal access. The writer offers several reasons for the claim, including animal safety and pollution reduction, but explanations are basic and source use is limited. Reasoning lacks depth, and some assertions are repeated rather than elaborated. Overall, the ideas are relevant and on-topic but underdeveloped.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is identifiable: "we need more trash cans around the community so there is less garbage laying around." ○ Purpose is to persuade the community "to put more trash cans around to help keep everything clean." ○ The claim is restated multiple times for emphasis but lacks precision about *how* trash cans will solve the problem.
✓ **Relevant, Accurate Reasons & Evidence** ○ Gives reasons: trash harms animals ("animals can choke on stuff they don't know is bad for them"), pollution ("the world will get more smoggy just from litter"), and community cleanliness. ○ References Source 3 implicitly ("throwing trash around or dumping oil down the drain makes it harder to clean the water"), though not cited. ○ Lacks direct quotations or specific evidence from the sources about environmental impact or community sanitation. ○ Reasons are relevant but broad, and evidence is mostly general rather than text-based.
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Provides some reasoning: more trash cans mean "no garbage laying around," which helps animals and reduces smog. ○ Reasoning is surface-level and often repeated rather than expanded ("this will help the community," "it will make the world cleaner"). ○ Does not explain *why* trash cans would reduce pollution or how improper disposal affects ecosystems. ○ No connection to counterarguments (e.g., cost, maintenance, behavior change). ○ Minimal explanation of source ideas beyond brief references.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays on topic consistently—every paragraph connects back to keeping the community clean. ○ Some drift into general statements about "a world filled with garbage" rather than supporting the claim with specific reasoning. ○ Conclusion reinforces the claim but repeats earlier ideas without adding insight.

Organization: 3

The essay has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Ideas follow a generally logical structure, but transitions are basic or repetitive, paragraphs sometimes blend similar ideas, and the conclusion restates earlier points without synthesizing them. Organization supports understanding but lacks the coherence and refinement of a higher-level response.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction but Limited Preview** ○ Opens with the problem ("people throwing trash on the ground causes pollution") and the proposed solution ("we need more trash cans"). ○ Does not preview the key reasons that will support the argument.
✓ **Logical Sequencing** ○ Moves from problem statement to environmental harm to animal harm to broader consequences to conclusion. ○ Order makes sense but sections occasionally repeat similar ideas rather than deepen them.
✓ **Basic or Repetitive Transitions** ○ Uses simple connectors ("also," "for example," "this will help"), which keep the flow but do not show relationships such as cause, contrast, or consequence. ○ Some paragraphs begin abruptly without transition from previous idea.
✓ **Conclusion Restates Without Synthesis** ○ Restates: "the world will get cleaner and animals won't get hurt," which repeats earlier sentences. ○ Does not tie the argument together or leave the reader with a final insight.

Voice: 3

The voice is sincere and shows concern for the environment and animals. However, the tone is sometimes repetitive, overly general, and conversational. The writer's purpose is evident, but the voice lacks the precision and confident argumentative tone expected at higher levels.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Sincere, Purposeful Voice** ○ Expresses care: "animals can choke on stuff they don't know is bad for them," "the world will be filled with garbage."
✓ **Occasional Conversational Tone** ○ Uses vague, informal phrases like "stuff," "bad for them," "help the community."
✓ **Repetition Weakens Effectiveness** ○ Repeats versions of "this will help the community" multiple times without adding nuance.
✓ **Limited Persuasive Authority** ○ Lacks strong connective reasoning or confident phrasing to fully persuade the audience.

Word Choice: 3

Word choice is generally understandable, but vocabulary is limited, general, or repetitive. The essay lacks precise, domain-specific language that would strengthen the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **General Word Choice** ○ Uses broad terms like “stuff,” “bad,” “help the community,” “makes everything cleaner.”
✓ **Limited Academic Vocabulary** ○ Does not use words such as “pollutants,” “ecosystem,” “debris,” “waste disposal,” or “community sanitation.”
✓ **Repetition of Key Terms** ○ Repeats “trash,” “pollution,” and “garbage” without adding specific description.
✓ **Occasional Vague or Imprecise Language** ○ “A world filled with garbage” describes a problem but lacks specificity.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are mostly clear and readable, but repetitive structures and limited variety reduce effectiveness. Some sentences rely on simple construction, and transitions between sentences are minimal.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Mostly Clear Sentences** ○ Sentences are understandable and complete.
✓ **Repetitive Patterns** ○ Several sentences begin with “This will…” or “It will…” creating monotony.
✓ **Limited Sentence Variety** ○ Relies heavily on simple subject-verb constructions.
✓ **Transitions Within Paragraphs Are Basic** ○ Uses “also” or “for example” without variation or sophistication.

Conventions: 3

The writing shows general control of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, but errors appear often enough to distract. Some run-on tendencies and missing commas are present. Errors do not obscure meaning but reduce clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Spelling Is Mostly Correct** ○ Everyday words spelled accurately; minor errors present but not consistent.
✓ **Some Run-Ons and Missing Commas** ○ Sentences occasionally combine multiple ideas without proper punctuation.
✓ **Capitalization Generally Correct** ○ Proper nouns and sentence starts are typically capitalized correctly.
✓ **Grammar Errors Appear Occasionally** ○ Minor agreement and phrasing issues reduce polish.

Use of Sources: 2

The essay includes some ideas that resemble source content but does not explicitly cite or paraphrase from the articles. Evidence is mostly general rather than source-based. Several claims could be strengthened significantly with direct reference to the texts.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Minimal Use of Sources** ○ References to pollution, water contamination, or animal harm resemble concepts from the sources but are not grounded in explicit evidence.
✓ **No Attributions or Citations** ○ No phrases such as "According to Source 1…" or paraphrased details identifying a source.
✓ **Generalized Evidence** ○ Claims like "animals can choke on stuff" or "the world will get more smoggy" lack support from the provided articles.
✓ **Reasoning Not Fully Linked to Evidence** ○ Explanations rely on opinion rather than text-supported reasoning.