Grade 7 – Expository Writing Work Sample: Approaching

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: 3

The essay takes a clear position in favor of offering foreign language classes rather than requiring them. The writer explains three reasons and uses some relevant logic about interest, responsibility, and employment needs. However, the response does not use any of the required sources, does not address a counterargument with evidence, and the reasoning is often basic or underdeveloped. While the ideas are coherent and mostly relevant, the argument lacks accuracy, depth, and source-based support.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The writer clearly states: "I think foreign language should be a class that's offered, not required." ○ The purpose—to persuade decision-makers to offer but not require foreign language instruction—is maintained throughout.
✓ **Relevant Reasons but No Source Evidence** ○ Reason 1: Younger children are better at learning language ("younger is a better age to teach… kids are more open and curious"). ○ Reason 2: Global workforce needs communication ("jobs… getting more and more involved with other countries"). ○ Reason 3: Required classes create stress and poor grades ("If they are forced… they are uninterested… can lead to bad grades"). ○ All reasons are relevant, but none come from the assigned sources (e.g., cognitive benefits, grammar awareness, bilingual milestones, school time constraints).
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Some explanation is present, such as why younger learners do better ("accents become harder to learn… pronunciation doesn't come out clearly"). ○ Explanation of stress and responsibility is logical but general. ○ Several ideas remain surface-level and repetitive without deeper development. ○ No evidence-based explanation of benefits or drawbacks from the sources. ○ No reasoning explaining *why offering is better than requiring* beyond student preference.
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays focused on why foreign language should be *offered* but not *forced*. ○ Paragraphs remain consistent in purpose. ○ Some repetition ("more responsibilities… more pressure") but no off-topic drift. ○ However, the required counterargument is missing.

Organization: 3

The essay has a clear introduction, body paragraphs grouped by reason, and a conclusion. Organization is generally logical and easy to follow. However, transitions are basic, the reasoning order sometimes feels repetitive, and the essay lacks the counterargument structure required by the task. Overall, the structure works but needs more sophistication and completeness.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Clear Introduction With Stated Claim** ○ Opens directly with the writer's position: "I think foreign language should be a class that's offered, not required."
✓ **Logical Grouping of Reasons** ○ Each body paragraph focuses on a separate idea: ▪ younger students learn more easily ▪ global jobs and cultural communication ▪ pressure and stress from required classes
✓ **Transitions Are Functional but Basic** ○ Uses simple transitions such as "Another reason" and "I also think," which help clarity but do not show complex relationships.
✓ **Conclusion Restates Main Idea** ○ Reinforces the claim: "That's why I think foreign language should be optional."
✓ **Missing Counterargument Paragraph** ○ No acknowledgment of the opposing viewpoint or rebuttal, which is a required organizational component of this task.

Voice: 3

The writer's voice is sincere and student-centered, with a clear viewpoint. However, tone is sometimes conversational, general, or repetitive, which weakens the argument's authority. More academic precision would strengthen the voice for a school-board audience.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Clear Personal Perspective** ○ Strong statements of belief appear throughout ("I think… I believe… I feel…").
✓ **Conversational Tone Reduces Formality** ○ Phrases like "that's stressful for kids" or "the pressure can cause bad grades" sound informal for the intended audience.
✓ **Generalizations Without Evidence** ○ Claims such as "younger kids are more curious" and "jobs in America are getting more involved with other countries" are broad and unsupported.
✓ **Repetition Weakens Impact** ○ Repeats words like "pressure" and "responsibility" without adding nuance.

Word Choice: 3

Word choice is clear enough for understanding, but often general, repetitive, or lacking academic specificity. Key terms from the sources are not used, and some wording is imprecise.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Some Effective Phrasing** ○ "Foreign language should be a class that's offered, not required" is precise and clear.
✓ **General or Vague Vocabulary** ○ Uses broad words like "pressure," "stressful," "curious," "future travel," and "jobs in America" without deeper explanation.
✓ **Missed Academic Vocabulary Opportunities** ○ Does not use terms such as "bilingual advantage," "cognitive development," "grammar awareness," "global communication."
✓ **Repetition of Key Words** ○ Frequent repetition of "pressure" and "responsibilities" weakens clarity.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are mostly readable, but patterns are repetitive and some structures are simplistic. Flow is generally clear but lacks the variety needed for stronger fluency.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable Sentence Structure** ○ Most sentences are complete and easy to follow.
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Patterns** ○ Many sentences begin with "I think," "I believe," or "This is why."
✓ **Limited Complexity** ○ Few sentences use complex structures to combine ideas.
✓ **Occasional Awkward Phrasing** ○ Example: "They are uninterested in something that they don't have a motivation to learn for the future."

Conventions: 4

The writing demonstrates control of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. A few minor issues appear, but none interfere with meaning.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Correct Spelling and Grammar** ○ Everyday vocabulary is spelled correctly; grammar generally standard.
✓ **Mostly Accurate Punctuation** ○ Uses periods and commas correctly in most places.
✓ **Minor Issues** ○ Occasional missing commas or slightly awkward constructions.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No run-ons or fragments serious enough to obscure meaning.

Use of Sources: 2

The essay does not use any evidence from the assigned sources. While reasoning is sometimes logical, it is unsupported by facts and research required by the task. The argument is entirely opinion-based.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **No Direct Use of Sources** o No quotations, paraphrases, or factual references from Sources 1–4.
✓ **Unsupported Claims** o Statements such as “younger is a better age,” or “jobs are more involved with other countries” are not sourced.
✓ **Missed Opportunities for Evidence** o Could use Source 4 for cognitive benefits or Source 1 for employment insights.
✓ **No Attribution** o Lacks “According to Source __” or equivalent signal phrases.
✓ **Missing Rebuttal Evidence** o No reference to Source 3’s concerns about scheduling or confusion.