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
✓ **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."
✓ **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.
✓ **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.
✓ **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.

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
✓ **Clear, Focused Introduction** ○ Establishes context for the argument and states the claim clearly: the penny has become a "nuisance."
✓ **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.
✓ **Strong Use of Transitions** ○ Uses purposeful transitions ("To begin with," "Moreover," "Nevertheless," "However") that show relationships between ideas.
✓ **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."

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
✓ **Confident, Persuasive Tone** ○ Uses strong language such as "It has now become more evident…" and "unnecessary burden on consumers."
✓ **Consistent Audience Awareness** ○ Arguments are framed around logical, economic concerns appropriate for decision-makers.
✓ **Professional and Controlled Style** ○ Maintains formal tone without being overly emotional.
✓ **Minor Repetition or General Statements** ○ Sentimental value section uses broader language and less specific reasoning, slightly weakening tone precision.

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
✓ **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”).
✓ **Clear, Meaningful Phrasing** ○ “Unnecessary burden on consumers” ○ “Outweigh the cost of keeping the penny in circulation”
✓ **A Few General or Repetitive Phrases** ○ Sentimental value section uses broader language (“many people cherish the penny”) lacking precision.
✓ **Opportunities to Add More Technical Language** ○ Could integrate terms like “net cost,” “commodity price,” or “inflation-adjusted value.”

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
✓ **Variety of Sentence Structures** ○ Effective mix of simple, compound, and complex sentences throughout.
✓ **Strong Transitions That Help Flow** ○ Uses phrases like “To begin with,” “Moreover,” and “However” to maintain coherence.
✓ **Occasional Lengthy or Overloaded Sentences** ○ Some sentences combine several ideas, making them slightly dense.
✓ **Minor Repetition in Sentence Beginnings** ○ A few paragraphs repeat transition openings, though this does not significantly hinder flow.

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
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Grammar** ○ No significant errors in common academic vocabulary.
✓ **Effective Punctuation Use** ○ Commas and periods used appropriately in most complex sentences.
✓ **Minor Improvements Possible** ○ A few long sentences could use clearer punctuation for readability.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No confusing run-ons or fragments.

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
✓ **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.
✓ **Strong Explanation After Evidence** ○ The writer explains *why* these facts matter: increased costs, wasted time, inefficiency.
✓ **Clear Attribution** ○ Uses phrases such as "according to Jeff Gore" or integrates the data in context.
✓ **Effective Use of Counterargument Evidence** ○ Acknowledges concerns about increased prices, then uses economists' perspectives to rebut the claim.