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
✓ **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.
✓ **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.
✓ **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).
✓ **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.

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
✓ **Clear Introduction Establishes Claim** ○ Opens with a direct claim: "I believe that the penny should be abolished." ○ Provides context for the argument.
✓ **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.
✓ **Transitions Support Clarity** ○ Uses clear transitions ("Another big argument…," "But sure enough…," "However…") to connect ideas.
✓ **Effective Counterargument Placement** ○ Introduces a common opposing argument (rounding up harms consumers) and responds with evidence.
✓ **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.

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
✓ **Confident Tone** ○ Uses clear, assertive statements: "I believe that the penny should be abolished."
✓ **Audience Awareness** ○ Frames concerns around government waste, consumer inefficiency, and economic reasoning.
✓ **Appropriate Persuasive Style** ○ Uses rhetorical emphasis ("that kind of money could go towards education…") effectively.
✓ **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.

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
✓ **Precise Economic Vocabulary** ○ Uses terms such as "production cost," "loses about $100 million," "raises the potential," "faster production," "transaction counters."
✓ **Effective and Purposeful Phrasing** ○ "People waste time fiddling with pennies…" ○ "This could cost people time away from their job…"
✓ **Some Vague Language** ○ "Iconic pieces of history," "a big deal," and "a lot of money" lack specificity.
✓ **Occasional Exaggeration or Overgeneralization** ○ Overstates some impacts ("lose time away from their job"), which weakens precision.

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
✓ **Varied Sentence Structures** ○ Uses a blend of simple, compound, and complex sentences.
✓ **Strong Use of Pacing and Transitions** ○ "However, some people still want to keep the penny…" ○ "But sure enough, the extra money could go towards…"
✓ **Occasional Long or Dense Sentences** ○ Some sentences pack multiple ideas and could be divided for clarity.
✓ **Minor Awkwardness in Phrasing** ○ Example: "This could cost people time away from their job" (slightly imprecise structure).

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
✓ **Accurate Spelling and Standard Grammar** ○ No notable spelling errors; grammar is consistently correct.
✓ **Mostly Effective Punctuation Use** ○ Commas used correctly in complex sentences for the most part.
✓ **Minor Issues** ○ Occasional sentences could benefit from additional commas or rephrasing for clarity.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ No major run-ons or fragments.

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
✓ **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.
✓ **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.
✓ **Limited Attribution Phrasing** ○ References evidence without consistent signal phrases ("According to Source 1…").
✓ **Sentimental/Charity Discussion Not Source-Based** ○ Includes claims not supported by the articles.