Grade 8 – Argumentative Writing Work Sample: Approaching

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: 3

The essay presents a clear claim to keep the penny and offers three relevant reasons (sentimental value, charity benefits, and concerns about price rounding). The writer uses one correct piece of evidence from the sources (penny drive donation example), shows some understanding of opposing views, and attempts to include rebuttal. However, much of the reasoning is based on misunderstandings or inaccurate interpretations of the sources. Key economic evidence is missing, explanations are often general or partially inaccurate, and several claims directly contradict the information provided in the source set. Overall, the ideas are organized and mostly relevant but lack accuracy, depth, and source-based support.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ The claim is stated immediately: "The penny has sentimental value… and can be a benefit to charities." ○ Reinforced in the conclusion: "You can see that if we don't have it… it will make a big difference in America."
✓ **Relevant Reasons (But Mostly Unsupported or Inaccurate)** ○ Sentimental value (penny history, designs). ○ Charity benefits (Source 4 example is used accurately). ○ Price rounding concerns (claim that rounding up harms consumers). ○ While these are relevant reasons, most supporting details are not from the assigned sources and some are incorrect.
✓ **Use of Evidence (Mixed Accuracy)** ○ Correct: Uses Source 4 accurately—"a middle school raised over $3,000 dollars in one week… just by collecting pennies." ○ Incorrect or Unsupported: ▪ Claims about sentimental value use historical facts not provided in the sources. ▪ Claim that the penny is "the first coin created by the U.S. Mint" is not supported by the sources. ▪ Significant misunderstanding of Source 3: the essay claims consumers will "always" pay more with rounding, but Source 3 indicates price rounding does not systematically harm consumers and may even reduce prices.
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation** ○ Some reasoning is present ("if you save up pennies, it adds up"), but explanations are general and sometimes inaccurate. ○ Sentimental value reasoning lacks connection to economic arguments. ○ Rounding-up example uses invented numbers ("$49.97 would be $50.00"), but ignores Source 3's explanation of standard rounding rules. ○ Several claims are repeated without deeper explanation ("it can add up to a big amount of money").

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ Stays focused on reasons to keep the penny. ○ Includes a partial counterargument ("You can argue that collecting pennies won't make much of a difference…"). ○ No major off-topic drift, but some details (like penny design history) do not advance the assignment's economic focus.

Organization: 3

The essay has a clear introduction, body paragraphs grouped by reason, and a conclusion. The structure is easy to follow, but transitions are basic, reasoning sometimes jumps abruptly, and the counterargument is incomplete and not source-accurate. Although the essay is organized, it needs clearer sequencing, stronger transitions, and a more fully developed rebuttal.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Introduction States Claim Clearly** ○ Opens with a direct position: "Some think the penny is useless… but I think the penny has sentimental value… can be a benefit to charities."
✓ **Body Paragraphs Organized by Reason** ○ Paragraphs address: ▪ sentimental value ▪ charity benefits ▪ price rounding concerns
✓ **Transitions Are Basic but Functional** ○ Uses simple phrases like "Another reason," "Finally." ○ Transitions do not explain relationships between ideas.
✓ **Abrupt Shifts in Reasoning** ○ Some paragraphs move quickly from sentimental value to design history without connecting to argument. ○ Rounding paragraph uses invented examples without linking back to source-based reasoning.
✓ **Weak Counterargument Structure** ○ Includes a brief nod to opposing views ("You can argue that collecting pennies won't make much of a difference…") ○ Lacks evidence-based rebuttal required by the task.
✓ **Conclusion Restates but Does Not Synthesize** ○ Ends with "it will make a big difference in America," but does not unify the main reasoning threads.

Voice: 3

The voice is sincere and engaged, with moments of passion for the topic. However, the tone is sometimes informal, overly sentimental, and not fully aligned with a policy-focused argument. Confidence fluctuates, and some statements rely on emotional appeals rather than evidence.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Engaged and Expressive Tone** ○ "The power of the penny," "even though it is a small coin, it can add up."

Evidence from Student Work:

Voice
✓ **Informal or Sentimental Voice** ○ Emotional language like “big difference in America,” “pennies help families” without evidence weakens formality.
✓ **Limited Audience Awareness** ○ Arguments sound conversational rather than directed at policymakers.
✓ **Confidence Varies** ○ Some claims are assertive (“pennies can add up”), while others are speculative (“two cents can be a lot”).

Word Choice: 3

Word choice is generally clear, but often broad, repetitive, or inaccurate. Emotional vocabulary replaces precise economic or policy terminology, and several claims use invented or misleading examples. A stronger command of academic language would elevate the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Some Clear Phrases** ○ “benefit to charities,” “make a difference,” “adds up.”
✓ **Vague or Overgeneralized Vocabulary** ○ “A big difference,” “a lot of people don’t want to give quarters,” “it really will affect charities.”
✓ **Invented or Inaccurate Examples** ○ Uses a fictional rounding example (“$49.97 would be $50.00”). ○ Claims the penny is the “first coin created by the U.S. Mint,” which is not in the sources.
✓ **Missing Academic Economic Terminology** ○ No use of terms such as “production cost,” “inflation,” “government losses,” “consumer rounding rules,” etc.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are mostly understandable, but fluency is affected by repetitive structures, shifts in focus, and awkward phrasing. Some sentences are overly long or contain multiple ideas that could be separated for clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Readable but Uneven Sentences** ○ “Even though it is a small coin it can make a big difference in someone’s pocket…” is long and slightly overloaded.
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Beginnings** ○ Several sentences begin with “This,” “It,” or “Another reason,” creating predictable rhythm.
✓ **Occasional Run-Ons or Awkward Constructions** ○ Some ideas are tacked together without strong transitions.
✓ **Flow Interrupted by Lists and Examples** ○ Historical coin list and invented rounding examples disrupt pacing.

Conventions: 4

Conventions are generally strong. A few minor errors appear, but meaning remains clear, and sentence boundaries are mostly correct. Punctuation could be improved in places, but overall control is solid.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Mostly Correct Grammar and Spelling** ○ Everyday vocabulary is spelled correctly. ○ Grammar errors are minimal.
✓ **Minor Punctuation Issues** ○ Missing commas in longer sentences (“Even though it is a small coin it can…”). ○ Occasional run-on tendencies.
✓ **Clear Sentence Boundaries** ○ Sentences are complete and maintain clarity even when fluency is uneven.
✓ **Meaning Always Clear** ○ No errors that significantly interfere with comprehension.

Use of Sources: 2

The essay includes some evidence from the sources (e.g., the penny drive from Source 4) and mentions opposing views, but most of the reasoning is unsupported, inaccurate, or contradicts the actual content of the Penny sources. Many claims rely on personal assumptions or invented examples rather than source-based information. Evidence integration is minimal and sometimes used incorrectly.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **Correct Use of One Source** ○ Accurate use of Source 4: “a middle school raised over $3,000 in one week by collecting pennies.”
✓ **Major Gaps in Source Use** ○ No use of economic cost data from Source 1 or Source 3. ○ No mention of time inefficiency (Source 1). ○ No accurate use of price-rounding research (Source 3).
✓ **Inaccurate or Contradictory Evidence** ○ Claims that rounding always raises prices contradict Source 3’s findings. ○ Historical claims (“first coin ever created”) are unsupported.
✓ **Minimal Attribution** ○ Does not identify source numbers when providing information.
✓ **Weak Counterargument Support** ○ Acknowledges opposing views but does not use source-based evidence to rebut them.