Grade 8 – Argumentative Writing Work Sample: Does Not Yet Meet

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: 2

The essay presents a clear claim to keep the penny, but the argument is based almost entirely on sentimental value, hypothetical examples, and unsupported assumptions, rather than evidence from the provided sources. Several statements directly contradict the source set (especially regarding rounding and charity impact), and key concepts such as production cost, economic efficiency, or time-waste data are missing. The essay shows effort and some relevant ideas, but lacks accurate evidence, depth of reasoning, and source grounding.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content
✓ **Clear Claim & Purpose** ○ Establishes the claim in the introduction: "Preserve the penny!… I think that is a bad idea [to remove it]." ○ Restates in the conclusion: "I believe the penny should be preserved."
✓ **Relevant but Unsupported Reasons** ○ Gives three main reasons: ▪ sentimental value ("created many memories," "figures of speech") ▪ savings on purchases ("you would have to pay $30 instead of $29.96") ▪ charity donations ("people would be more likely to donate their pennies") ○ None of these reasons are supported with evidence from the required sources.
✓ **Evidence Use Is Inaccurate or Not From Sources** ○ Uses an invented or non-task article: "according to this article from Washington Middle School Chronicle…"—this is not one of the provided sources. ○ Claims about rounding contradict the actual economic analysis in Source 3, where price-rounding is shown not to harm consumers. ○ Claims about charity impact are unsupported by any source.
✓ **Development, Reasoning & Explanation (Weak)** ○ Historical details about early pennies ("Lady Liberty… Flying Eagle… Indian Head…") are off-topic for the argumentative purpose; these are not provided in the sources. ○ The writer states effects without reasoning: "two cents can be a lot for some people," "it could hurt charities," without explaining why or using evidence. ○ Overgeneralizations appear throughout ("two cents can be a lot," "people donate pennies more often than quarters" with no support).
✓ **Focus & Relevance to the Argument** ○ The essay stays on topic—preserving the penny—but relies on general feelings and hypothetical scenarios rather than economic arguments required by the task. ○ Some drift into historical trivia that does not advance the argument.

Organization: 2

The essay has an introduction and conclusion, but the internal structure is inconsistent and not well aligned to the argument. Paragraphs are uneven, reasoning does not build logically, and transitions are limited. The required counterargument structure is missing, and several sections drift into off-task historical description instead of advancing the argument.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization
✓ **Introduction Establishes Position but Lacks Preview** ○ Opens with "Preserve the penny!" but does not provide an overview of reasons.
✓ **Body Paragraphs Not Logically Sequenced** ○ Moves abruptly from sentiment to rounding to charity to historical trivia. ○ Historical list of coin designs ("Lady Liberty… Flying Eagle… Indian Head…") does not support the writer's reasoning.
✓ **Transitions Are Limited** ○ Uses a few transitional phrases ("This will affect…", "Lastly"), but most ideas shift suddenly.
✓ **Conclusion Restates Claim but Does Not Synthesize** ○ Repeats earlier ideas but does not tie the argument together.
✓ **Missing Counterargument and Rebuttal** ○ No acknowledgment of opposing views from the sources (e.g., cost of production, time inefficiency, economist analysis).

Voice: 2

The voice is earnest but inconsistent and relies heavily on emotional appeals, personal assumptions, and conversational tone. Audience awareness is limited, and the argument lacks the formal persuasive tone expected for a civic/economic topic.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice
✓ **Conversational Tone** ○ Statements like "two cents can be a lot for some people!" and "this has created many memories" sound informal for the intended audience.
✓ **Emotional but Unsupported Appeals** ○ "Seeing the penny shows us our history" ○ "This really will affect charities a lot" ○ These statements are not supported by evidence.
✓ **Limited Audience Awareness** ○ Essay does not address policymakers or acknowledge economic concerns that would matter in a public policy discussion.
✓ **Inconsistent Authoritative Voice** ○ Sentimental appeals outweigh evidence, reducing persuasive credibility.

Word Choice: 2

Word choice is simple, repetitive, and imprecise at times. The essay uses emotional vocabulary and relies on unsupported generalizations instead of precise economic or policy language. Several opportunities to incorporate specific terms from the sources are missed.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice
✓ **Vague or Overgeneralized Language** ○ "This will affect us a lot," ○ "two cents can be a lot," ○ "seeing the penny shows us our history."
✓ **Emotional and Figurative Language** ○ "Created many memories for us," ○ "figures of speech we use daily."
✓ **Missing Academic Vocabulary** ○ No use of terms such as "production cost," ✓ economic efficiency," "consumer impact," or "minting expense."
✓ **Repetition of Simple Language** ○ Frequent use of "a lot," "many," "people," without additional specificity.

Sentence Fluency: 3

Sentences are mostly readable, but the writing lacks variety and sometimes feels repetitive or disjointed. Flow is uneven due to shifts between emotional statements, facts, and off-topic details.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency
✓ **Simple, Mostly Correct Sentences** ○ "It was created many memories for us." ○ "Two cents can be a lot for some people."
✓ **Repetitive Sentence Beginnings** ○ Several sentences start with similar structures ("This is good because…," "This will affect…").
✓ **Occasional Awkward or Incorrect Constructions** ○ "It was created many memories" ○ "Pennies can remind us of the old days."
✓ **Flow Interrupted by Off-Topic Lists** ○ Long list of old penny designs disrupts fluency and pacing.

Conventions: 3

Conventions are generally adequate but inconsistent. Some sentences contain grammar errors or awkward phrasing, and a few punctuation issues reduce clarity.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions
✓ **Minor Grammar Issues** ○ "It was created many memories for us" (incorrect construction). ○ Occasional missing words ("This can affect people a lot the penny…" missing punctuation).
✓ **Some Capitalization and Punctuation Issues** ○ Missing commas in complex or compound sentences. ○ A few unclear sentence boundaries.
✓ **Spelling Generally Correct** ○ No major spelling errors that obscure meaning.
✓ **Meaning Remains Clear Despite Errors** ○ Errors do not prevent understanding but reduce overall polish.

Use of Sources: 1

The essay uses **no evidence from the four required sources**. It relies entirely on personal opinions, sentimental reflections, hypothetical examples, and incorrect claims. Because the essay never draws from the source material, it does not meet task expectations for evidence-based argumentation.

Evidence from Student Work: Use of Sources
✓ **No Use of Assigned Sources** ○ No quotations or paraphrases from Source 1, 2, 3, or 4.
✓ **Evidence Presented Is Inaccurate or Irrelevant** ○ "According to Washington Middle School Chronicle…" is not part of this task's source set. ○ Claims about rounding, charity, and pricing contradict the economic information in Source 3.
✓ **Missed Opportunities to Use Strong Evidence** ○ Sources provide data about minting cost, government losses, consumer rounding effects, and penny's limited purchasing power.
✓ **No Attribution or Source-Based Rebuttal** ○ Counterarguments and rebuttal are absent.