

**Triple Q**

# Argument Writing for Middle School

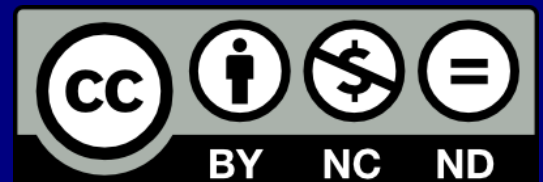
## Junk Food Wars

UNIT 1

*What policy should your  
school follow about  
school lunches?*

This workbook belongs to: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Argument Writing for Middle School

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# Argument Writing for Middle School

## Tab 1 – Texts

- Keep Healthy Meals in Schools
- Eliminate School Nutrition Standards
- Assorted Evidence Table



# Keep Healthy Meals in Schools

by Sara Martin

1 In 2010, Congress passed the *Healthy Hunger-Free*  
2 *Kids Act*. This new law updated the nutrition  
3 standards for school meals in an effort to help  
4 students eat healthier foods. For decades, school  
5 cafeterias have served mostly processed foods.  
6 These foods are easy to prepare, but they tend to be  
7 high in calories and low in nutrients. The new  
8 standards require schools to offer more fruits,  
9 vegetables, whole-grains, and foods that are low in  
10 sugar, fat and salt. They also require schools to limit  
11 portion sizes so students don't get more calories than  
12 they need. School meals should be healthy, so it is  
13 important to keep the standards and give them time  
14 to work.

15 One reason to keep the standards is that they are  
16 beginning to make a difference. Former First Lady  
17 Michelle Obama, a key player in getting the law  
18 passed, wrote this two years after the standards  
19 went into effect:

20 Today, 90 percent of schools report that they are  
21 meeting these new standards. As a result, kids  
22 are now getting more fruits, vegetables, whole  
23 grains and other foods they need to be healthy.

24 A three-year study from the University of  
25 Washington shows that the standards are helping  
26 students make better food choices. Researchers  
27 analyzed the food items selected by middle- and  
28 high school students. They found that students are  
29 now choosing more foods that are high in protein,  
30 iron, calcium and vitamin C. They are also choosing  
31 more foods that are low in calories.

32 Another reason to keep the standards is that they will  
33 make even more of a difference as schools and  
34 students adjust to them. This is not an easy  
35 adjustment, but many organizations are helping. The  
36 United Fresh Produce Association is helping schools  
37 buy and use fresh produce. The U.S. Department of  
38 Agriculture (USDA) is helping schools purchase  
39 kitchen equipment needed to prepare healthy meals.  
40 It is also providing toolkits with strategies for  
41 helping kids choose healthy foods.

42 Critics claim that students are refusing to eat the  
43 healthy foods and that more food is being wasted.  
44 However, according to a survey conducted by the  
45 Berkeley School of Public Health, nearly 90 percent  
46 of students said they like the taste of some or all of  
47 the new foods. In addition, the University of  
48 Connecticut's Rudd Center conducted a study in  
49 which they collected data before and after the  
50 standards went into effect. They found that students  
51 are eating more of their lunches and throwing away  
52 less food than they did before the standards were  
53 updated.

54 Finally, weakening or eliminating the standards  
55 would put students at risk. The American Heart  
56 Association (AHA) vigorously opposes any attempt  
57 to abolish or roll back the standards. AHA's Nancy  
58 Brown writes that doing so "puts our children's  
59 health in jeopardy and sets them on an early path to  
60 heart disease, stroke, disability, and early death."  
61 According to the Center for Disease Control, one in  
62 three U.S. children is at risk for diet-related health  
63 problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure,  
64 and diabetes. Given these facts, abolishing or  
65 weakening the standards would be a grave mistake.



# Eliminate School Nutrition Standards

by Joe Michaels

1 In 2010, Congress passed a law that established  
2 strict nutrition standards to promote healthy eating.  
3 The standards require schools to limit portion sizes,  
4 serve more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and  
5 reduce sugar, fat, and salt. These standards should  
6 never have been passed in the first place, and  
7 experience has shown that they do not work.  
8 The standards should be eliminated or, at the very  
9 least, modified to address the real-world needs of  
10 students and schools.

11 The federal government has no business telling  
12 schools what to offer in their cafeterias and vending  
13 machines. In the words of Congressman Steve King  
14 of Iowa, “It’s a gross overreach of the federal  
15 government to step in and ration food to kids.”  
16 According to Daren Bakst, a research fellow at the  
17 Heritage Foundation, decisions about school food  
18 should be left to parents and local school officials.  
19 He says, “Parents concerned about the food provided  
20 to their children at school are much better off going  
21 to local officials to address these issues. They will  
22 generally get the chance to meet with the officials  
23 and have their voices heard.”

24 Many students are refusing to eat the “healthy”  
25 meals. According to the School Nutrition  
26 Association (SNA), roughly 1 million kids have  
27 stopped eating school lunches since the standards  
28 went into effect. In addition, about \$3.8 million  
29 worth of produce is thrown away every day in  
30 schools across America. It does no good to serve  
31 healthy foods if students won’t eat them.

32 Students who do eat the meals complain that they  
33 are not getting enough to eat. For example, at a high  
34 school in Kansas, the cafeteria reduced portion sizes  
35 of chicken nuggets and other popular foods in order  
36 to meet the standards. Students voiced their outrage  
37 in a music video called *We Are Hungry*. Their video  
38 has been viewed more than 1.6 million times on  
39 YouTube.

40 According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture,  
41 the standards limit middle school lunches to 700  
42 calories. This is about a third of what the average  
43 student needs each day. However, the Union of  
44 Concerned Scientists points out that school lunch is  
45 the only complete meal some students get all day.  
46 The 700 calorie limit is much too low for those  
47 students as well as students who are more active  
48 than average.

49 Supporters of the standards say improving school  
50 meals will keep kids healthy. However, the problem  
51 is not what kids eat at school. The problem is that  
52 most kids eat too much junk food and don't get  
53 enough exercise. Researchers from the National  
54 Cancer Institute found that nearly 40 percent of the  
55 calories children consume are empty calories from  
56 sugary drinks, cookies, donuts, and ice cream.  
57 According to the President's Council on Fitness,  
58 only one in three children are physically active every  
59 day. Worse, the average child spends almost eight  
60 hours a day in front of a screen watching television,  
61 using a computer, or playing video games. Because  
62 the standards cannot change what kids do at home,  
63 they have created more problems than they solve.  
64 If they cannot be modified to address these  
65 problems, they should be eliminated altogether.

## Assorted Evidence

1	According to a study by the USDA, most students like fruits and vegetables when they try them. About 85% of students who tried a fruit ate all of it, as did 60% who tried a vegetable.	2	A 2015 report from PEW Charitable Trusts says that 90% of districts need at least one new piece of kitchen equipment to prepare healthy meals. Many also need money to train kitchen staff.
3	The School Nutrition Association asked Congress to ease some of the standards. For example, they say banning white flour is too strict because whole wheat pizza crust tastes like cardboard.	4	A three-year study described in <i>Pediatrics</i> found that kids in states that ban junk food in schools are more likely to be at a healthy weight than kids in states that allow schools to serve junk food.
5	A study described in the <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> found that children who like healthy foods continue to like them as adults.	6	The National School Board Association warned that many districts are cutting back on salaries and other necessities in order to meet the standards.
7	According to CNN, students have been tweeting pictures of school meals under the hashtag #ThanksMichelleObama. Most complain that the food is “gross” and the portion sizes are “pathetic.”	8	Michelle Ross is a researcher at the Berkeley School of Public Health. She says that many school districts are working hard to make their menus more appealing.
9	A 2015 survey by the Kellogg Foundation found that 93% of Americans believe that schools should serve healthy meals, and 86% think the nutrition standards should stay the same or be strengthened.	10	In a survey by the School Nutrition Association, 70% of districts report that the standards have caused financial problems due to increased food costs and decreased student participation.
11	The School Nutrition Association found that most districts have at least one program to promote healthy food choices. For example, many districts offer taste tests so students can sample new recipes and give feedback.	12	<i>Cooking up Change</i> is an annual contest in which teams of high school students create tasty school meals that follow the standards. Winning teams compete in a cook-off for the national championship in Washington, D.C.
13	The Center for Disease Control promotes nutrition education programs to help kids understand why healthy food is important. For example, hands-on activities can help kids see that bones without calcium break easily and that it takes a lot of exercise to burn off the calories in a can of soda.	14	The USDA’s <i>Smarter Lunchroom</i> strategies increase sales of healthy foods. For example, one middle school tripled their fruit and vegetable sales simply by moving the salad bar to the center of the cafeteria. Other schools label foods with fun names like “x-ray vision carrots.”
15	A two-year study in Philadelphia found that kids in schools with nutrition education programs were half as likely to become overweight as kids in schools without such programs.	16	The USDA’s <i>Farm to School</i> Program provides training and money to help schools build school gardens and teach students to grow and prepare healthy foods.





## Tab 2 – Worksheets

- Lesson 1 Quickwrite
- Lesson 2 Quickwrite
- Lesson 4 Quickwrite
- Lesson 5 Quickwrite
- Lesson 10 Signal Words



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 1

### Quickwrite!

In response to "Keep Healthy Meals in Schools"

Do you agree with this author about the school nutrition standards?  
Explain why or why not.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 2

### Quickwrite!

In response to both texts

What does each of these authors want you to think about this topic?

**Keep Healthy Meals in Schools**  
by Sara Martin

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**Eliminate School Nutrition Standards**  
by Joe Michaels

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 4

### Quickwrite!

In response to both texts

What is the most convincing reason each of these authors gave? In your own words, briefly describe each reason and evidence the author provided to support it.

**Keep Healthy Meals in Schools**  
by Sara Martin

Most convincing reason:

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Evidence for that reason:

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**Eliminate School Nutrition Standards**  
by Joe Michaels

Most convincing reason:

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Evidence for that reason:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 5

### Quickwrite!

Suppose you were put in charge of school food for a large district. What's the first thing you would do to help students eat healthier foods? Explain why you think doing this would help.

**The first thing I would do:**

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**Why I think this would help students eat healthier foods:**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 10

### Signal Words

Underline or highlight the signal words and draw an arrow to show what they signal.

Text	Same Direction  Change Direction 
Most districts have at least one program to promote healthy food choices. For example, many districts offer taste tests so students can sample new recipes and give feedback.	
Roughly 1 million kids have stopped eating school lunches since the standards went into effect. In addition, about \$3.8 million worth of produce is thrown away every day.	
Critics claim that students are refusing to eat the healthy foods. However, nearly 90 percent of students said they like the taste of some or all of the new foods.	
Many students say they like the healthy foods required by the standards. On the other hand, many students hate them.	
The American Heart Association vigorously opposes any attempt to abolish or roll back the standards. Moreover, 93% of Americans believe that schools should serve healthy meals, and 86% think the nutrition standards should stay the same or be strengthened.	
Sara Martin thinks we should keep the standards and give them time to work. In contrast, Joe Michaels believes they should be eliminated.	
Although supporters of the standards say improving school meals will keep kids healthy, the problem is not what kids eat at school. The problem is that most kids eat too much junk food and never exercise.	
There are many hardships involved in completely revising the menus for school meals. Yet nearly all schools report that they are successfully meeting the standards.	
Congressman King says it's an overreach for the federal government to decide what kids eat at school. Similarly, Daren Bakst says decisions about school food should be left to parents and school officials.	
Students who do eat the meals complain that they are not getting enough to eat. For instance, at a high school in Kansas, students made a music video called We Are Hungry.	





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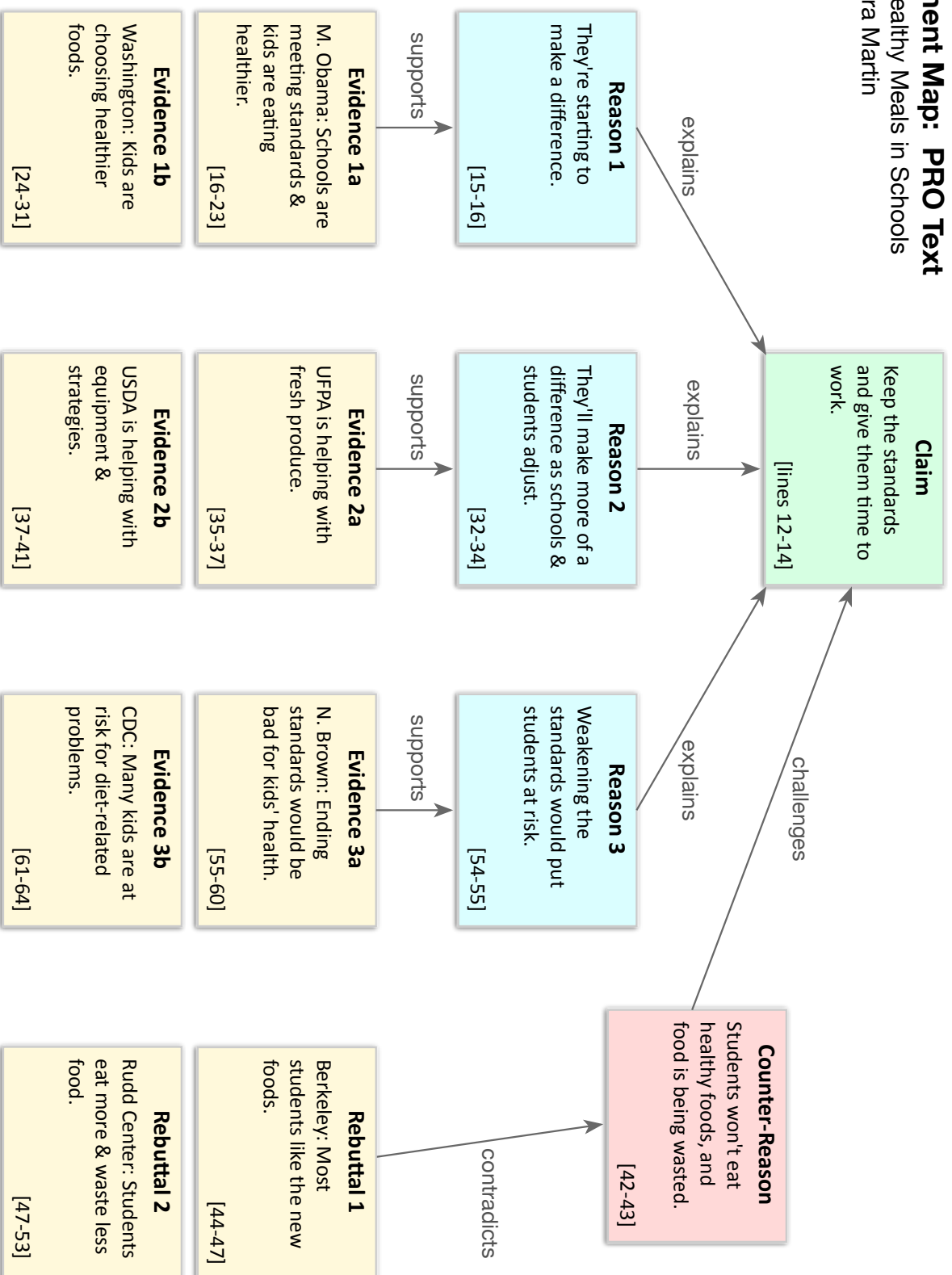
## Tab 3 – Argument Maps

- Map of PRO text:  
Keep Healthy Meals in Schools
- Map of CON text:  
Eliminate School Nutrition Standards



# Argument Map: PRO Text

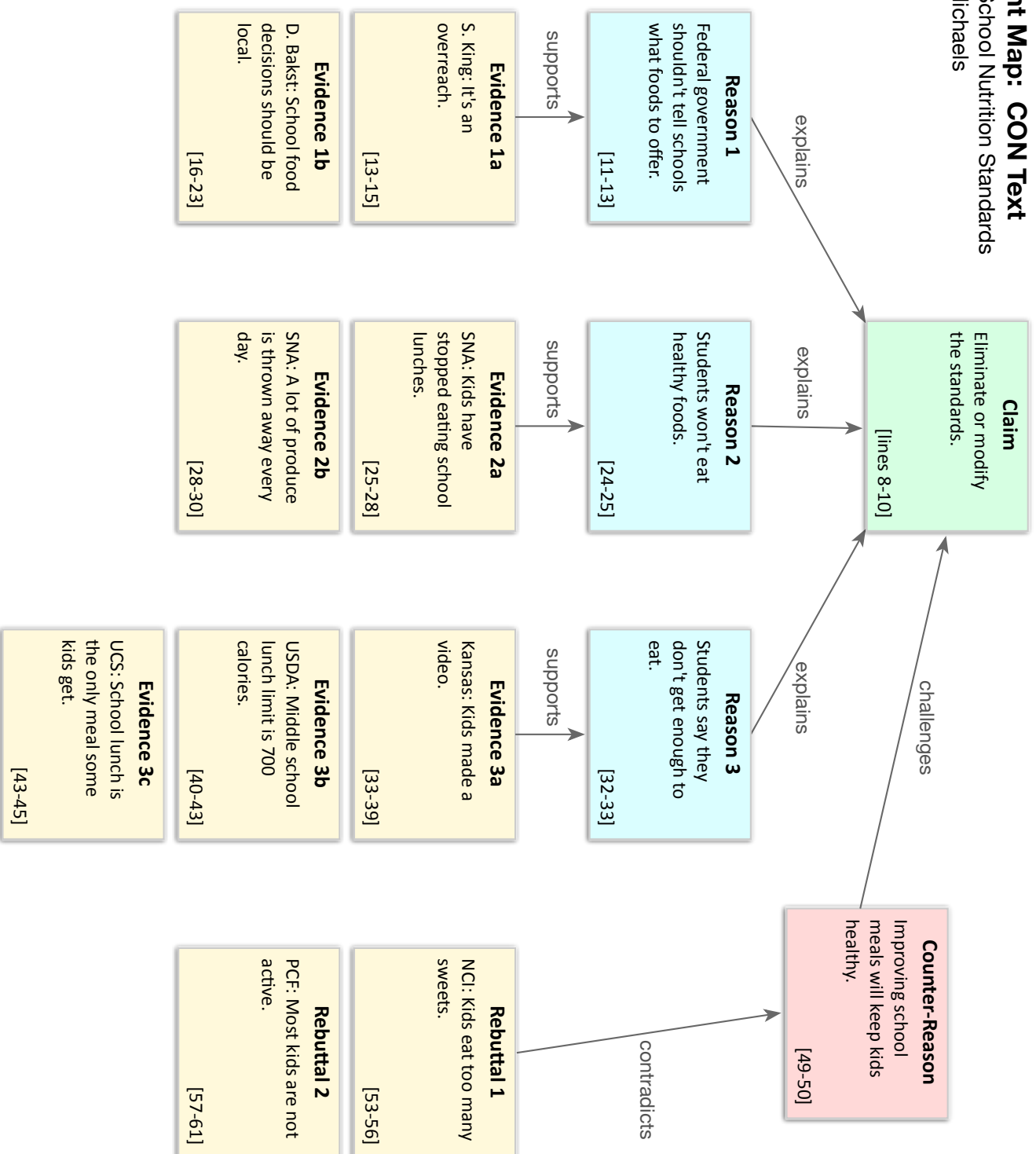
Keep Healthy Meals in Schools  
by Sara Martin





# Argument Map: CON Text

Eliminate School Nutrition Standards  
by Joe Michaeals





## Tab 4 – Planning your essay

- Essay Criteria
- Outline Template
- Peer Feedback 1
- Peer Feedback 2





# Junk food Wars

## Extended Writing Task: Argument Essay

Essay prompt:

**What policy should your school follow about school lunches?**

Your score will be based on the following criteria:

<b>Claim</b>	Your claim is clearly stated and it responds to the prompt
<b>Reasons</b>	You include at least two different reasons why you believe your Claim
<b>Evidence</b>	Each reason is supported by at least one piece of evidence
<b>Conclusion</b>	Your essay ends with a conclusion that connects back to the Claim
<b>Signal Words</b>	You use signal words to help readers follow the logic of your argument
<b>Organization</b>	Your essay has paragraphs that organize your argument

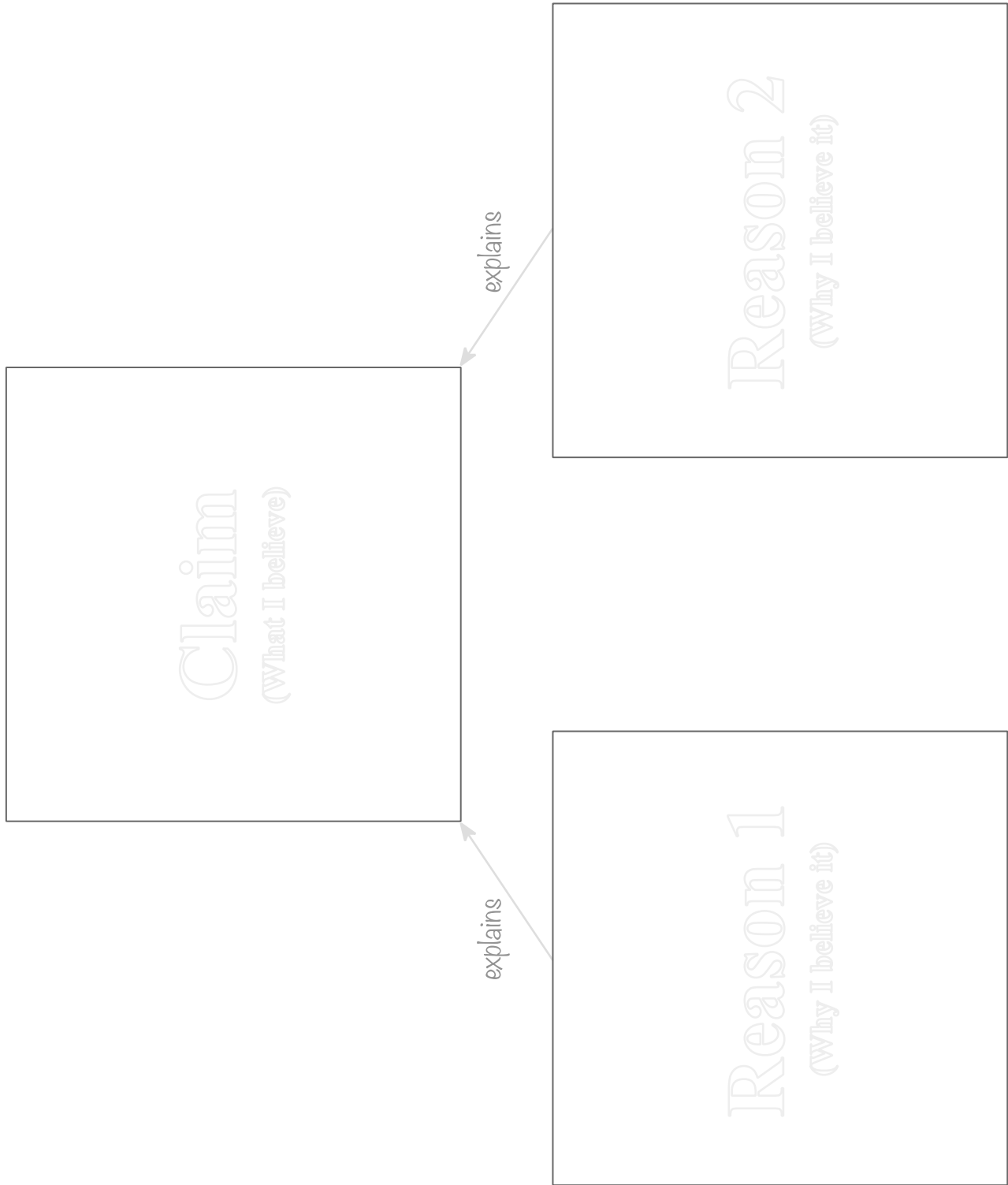
Bonus points will be awarded for:

- a third reason with evidence
- a counter-reason and rebuttal
- originality of ideas



Outline Map on Back →





supports

Evidence 2a

(How I know it's true)

Evidence 2b

(How I know it's true)

supports

Evidence 1a

(How I know it's true)

Evidence 1b

(How I know it's true)

← Outline Map on Front

Counter-Reason  
(A reason that goes against my argument)

challenges claim

goes against

Rebuttal a  
(How I know it's false)

Rebuttal b  
(How I know it's false)







explains claim

Reason 3  
(Why I believe it)

supports

Evidence 3a  
(How I know it's true)

Evidence 3b  
(How I know it's true)



# PEER FEEDBACK I

- Read the author's claim and provide feedback by writing comments that answer the questions below.
- Write your comments on a post-it and place it on the author's outline near the claim.
- Add your initials to the post-it so your partner will remember who wrote it.
- Honest feedback can help your partner improve their essay.

Essay prompt: **What policy should your school follow about school lunches?**

Question 1 – Do you understand exactly what the claim is saying?	
If your answer is:	You could write something like:
yes	Your claim is clear.
kind of	Try to make your claim a little clearer.
no	I don't understand your claim.
Question 2 – Does the claim address the prompt?	
If your answer is:	You could write something like:
yes	Addresses prompt.
no	Does not address prompt.
Question 3 – Can the claim be supported by text evidence?	
If your answer is:	You could write something like:
yes	Easy to support.
kind of	Might be hard to support.
no	Will probably be hard to support.



# PEER FEEDBACK 2

- Examine the author's outline and write comments that answer the questions below.
- Write your comments and your initials on post-its and place them on the author's outline.
- Honest feedback can help your partner improve their essay.

Essay prompt: **What policy should your school follow about school lunches?**

Question 1 – Is there a clearly stated claim that addresses the prompt?	
If your answer is:	You could write something like:
yes	Your claim is clear and it addresses the prompt.
no	Try to make your claim clearer; Claim does not address prompt.
Question 2 – Are there at least two different reasons?	
yes	Two different reasons; Three different reasons.
no	Missing a reason; Reasons are the same.
Question 3 – Does each reason clearly explain why the author believes the claim?	
yes	Your reasons explain your claim.
no	This reason doesn't really explain your claim; This reason isn't clear.
Question 4 – Is there at least one piece of text evidence for each reason?	
yes	You have text evidence for each reason.
no	You don't have text evidence for this reason; This is not text evidence.
Question 5 – Does the evidence actually support its reason?	
yes	Your evidence supports your reasons.
no	This evidence doesn't really support its reason; This evidence isn't clear.



## Tab 5 – Writing your essay

- Teacher’s Model Draft
- Self-Checklist
- Draft paper
- Sample Marked Essay
- Scoring Rubric
- Sample Draft & Final
- Final essay paper





## Teacher's Model Draft

In 2010, Congress passed a law that required schools to serve healthier lunches. However, the only way to make sure students actually eat the healthy lunches is to ban all junk food and allow only healthy food on school property.

First, if only healthy foods are available, students will eat them or go hungry. When students eat healthy foods, they will learn to like them. A survey by the Berkeley School of Public Health found that 90% of students like the healthy foods schools are now serving. According to Berkeley researcher Michelle Ross, districts are trying to design menus that appeal to their students. When that happens, the students will like healthy foods even more. Both pieces of evidence show that when schools serve healthy foods, students will learn to like them.

In conclusion, if junk food is banned from schools, students will eat healthy foods and learn to like them. If junk food is allowed in schools, students will keep eating junk food and their health will be in danger.



# SELF CHECKLIST

Author \_\_\_\_\_

## CLAIM

- yes  no Do you state a claim?
- yes  no Is it clear?
- yes  no Does your claim respond to the writing prompt?

## REASONS

- yes  no Do you have at least 2 reasons?
- yes  no Do they explain why you believe the claim?
- yes  no Are your reasons different from each other?

## EVIDENCE

- yes  no Do you support each reason with evidence from the text?
- yes  no Are your sources given?
- yes  no Do you have different evidence for different reasons?
- yes  no Do you explain how your evidence supports its reason?

## CONCLUSION

- yes  no Do you have a conclusion?
- yes  no Does it connect back to the claim?

## LANGUAGE & ORGANIZATION

- yes  no Do you use signal words to help readers follow your argument?
- yes  no Do you use paragraphs to organize your argument?

What are you doing in your essay to make sure your argument will be convincing to your readers?

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## Sample Marked Essay

**C**

The school's policy should be to allow junk foods, but don't let kids have them until after they eat their healthy food. So if they eat all their vegetables they can have a cookie, or if they finish their salad they can have some chips.

**R1**

One reason I think this is because kids really like junk food, so they will eat healthy foods to get the junk food as a reward. Another reason is because this will

**R2**

keep kids from being hungry. High school students in

**E2a**

Kansas made a video to show that healthy lunches left them feeling hungry. So if they had some junk food with the healthy food, they wouldn't be hungry.

In conclusion, schools should not ban junk foods.



## Argument Essay Scoring Rubric – Unit 1

<b>Claim</b>	
2	Your claim is clearly stated and it answers the writing prompt.
1	Your claim addresses the topic, but it is not clear or it does not answer the prompt.
<b>Reasons</b> (third reason is bonus)	
2	You include at least two different reasons that explain why you believe your claim.
1	You have only one reason, or your reasons are very similar or do not connect to your claim.
<b>Evidence</b>	
2	For each reason, you include at least one piece of evidence that clearly supports the reason.
1	You support one but not all of your reasons with text evidence, or your evidence does not clearly support a reason.
<b>Counter-Reason &amp; Rebuttal</b> (bonus)	
2	You include a counter-reason that goes against your claim and a rebuttal that goes against the counter-reason.
1	You include a counter-reason and rebuttal, but your rebuttal supports the counter-reason rather than arguing against it.
<b>Conclusion</b>	
2	Your essay ends with a conclusion that connects back to your claim.
1	Your essay ends with a conclusion, but it is unclear or simply restates your claim.
<b>Signal Words</b>	
2	You use signal words to help readers follow the logic of your argument.
1	You include signal words, but you use them incorrectly.
<b>Organization</b>	
2	Your essay is divided into paragraphs, and each paragraph has just one big idea.
1	Your essay is divided into paragraphs, but you have a paragraph with multiple reasons or a reason and counter-reason.
<b>Originality of Ideas</b> (bonus)	
2	Your argument is different from the unit texts. Your reasons might be original, or you might use evidence in an original way.
1	Part of your argument is original, but one or more segments are very similar to a unit text.



Sample First Draft on Back →



Sample First Draft

Introduce standards so readers know what I'm talking about.

# = intro & claim

Lunches are getting healthier and students are

getting grumpier. The standards to make lunch

healthier is ridiculous because if the students don't like

Divide essay into paragraphs:

C

1 - intro & claim

2 - reason 1

3 - reason 2

4 - conclusion

# = reason 1 full name

them why should we have them? According to SNA,

E1a

1 million students have stopped eating school lunches.

Moreover, need source

E1b

Also that 4 million dollars worth of produce has been

ADD REASONS

# = reason 2

1 - kids don't like the food

2 - not enough food

thrown away everyday. Students need more calories in

E2

them. Schools have been limiting 6th to 8th graders to

only 700 calories for lunch. Students made a video to

Add more evidence for reason 2.

# = conclusion

show that they are still hungry. Students have the right

Add sentences to explain how my evidence shows my reasons are true.

to eat whatever they want at lunch. The standards are

ridiculous and should be eliminated for good.



School lunches are getting healthier and students are getting grumpier. Congress passed a law in 2010 with new standards to make school lunches healthier and more nutritious. Many students disagree with these standards as do I. I think they are ridiculous and completely unnecessary. If students do not agree with them, why should they have to deal with them?

Students are not happy with the food required by the standards. A report from the School Nutrition Association (SNA) points out that approximately 1 million students have stopped buying school lunches. Moreover, the SNA reports that nearly 4 million dollars worth of produce is being thrown away every day. This shows that, because of the standards, students are unhappy and nutritious food is going to waste.

The standards do not provide enough food. Children need to have enough energy to last through the day. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says that lunches for 6th to 8th graders can only have 700 calories. This is not enough because the Union of Concerned Scientists says that school lunch is the biggest meal some students will eat all day. Students in Kansas created a video to protest the small portions. Over 1.6 million people have viewed their video on YouTube. This shows that many people believe the calorie limit is too strict.

Students have a right to have their opinions heard. They are the ones who eat school lunches, so they should have a say in what is served. I believe my evidence shows that the standards are completely unreasonable and should be officially eliminated for good.

← Sample Final Essay on Front









