Student Handout: Two Example Essays and Rubrics

**Game-Based Learning Sample Introduction: Dr**. **Robles’s Argument is Stronger**

 In his essay, Dr. Robles contends that game-based learning is merely a fad because eLearning is not effective, traditional teaching helps students learn soft skills, and game-based learning is old ideas presented in new ways. However, Dr. Morgan contends that game-based learning is an effective corporate training strategy because many employers are already gamers, and game-based learning is “infinitely repeatable.” Dr. Robles has the stronger argument because Dr. Morgan does not prove that game-based learning is actually effective.

 **Position and Reason 1:** Dr. Robles begins his argument by stating that eLearning is not effective. **Evidence 1:** To prove this point, he quotes an anonymous source that states that eLearning is “just lectures and notes.” **Analysis of Evidence: Is evidence STORNG OR WEAK?:** This evidence is not a strong point: it is not validated by any proof. **Evidence 2:** Nevertheless, the second piece of evidence is stronger: Dr. Robles’s gives an observation from his teaching experience—that, “to teach skills beyond basic facts,” the person-to person method is still more effective. **Strong or Weak and WHY?:** Although this is Dr. Robles’s opinion, he is a credible source as a professor of education. **Reason 2:** The second reason that he is against eLearning is that it hurts the students’ development of soft skills. He concedes that game-based learning may help students learn a particular skill or concept, but, without a traditional classroom/business setting with face-to-face interaction, the students will not develop the necessary soft skills (often communication skills) for successful employment. **Evidence 1:** To prove this point, Robles’s quotes a 2013 study that showed that students scored higher overall and on tests—but “performed poorly” on written assignments and participated less in class activities. **STRONG or Weak and WHY:** This is strong evidence because it concedes that game-based learning can have some positive effects, but it points out the problem with using game-based learning to teach writing or speaking skills. **Evidence 2:** Furthermore, Robles’s contrasts game-based learning with the traditional classroom experience—where students can ask questions and interact with the teacher and their peers. This kind of interaction develops “soft skills” or “people skills.” **STRONG or Weak and WHY:** This evidence is logical and, therefore, strong. **Reason 3:** Finally, Robles contends that game-based learning is “old ideas” presented in “new ways.” **Evidence 1:** He uses a quote from The Economist that proves this point. **Strong or Weak and WHY?** This is strong evidence because it comes from a reputable magazine. **Evidence 2:** Next, he uses an example to demonstrate that video game points and rewards are like old sales contests. **Strong or Weak and Why?** This is valid evidence because it is logical. **Summation:** Overall, Robles’s argument that eLearning is just a fad is a strong one.

Counterargument: **Position:** On the contrary, Dr. Morgan argues that game-based learning is an effective training strategy for businesses. **Refutation:** However, Dr. Morgan never proves that game-based learning is actually effective. **Evidence 1:**The first piece of evidence that attempts to prove this is a statement that “researchers” say that game-based learning has aspects that stimulate learners. **STRONG or Weak and WHY:** Even if this unproven assumption is true, there is no proof that these “stimulated” learners learn more from games than traditional teaching. **Evidence 2:** The second piece of evidence is an anonymous 2012 report that says game-based learning may have “a positive impact on higher order skills such as decision-making or problem-solving.” **Strong or Weak and Why?** What kind of impact? If Dr. Morgan wants to make a strong case that game-based learning is effective, she needs to have actual data that supports this claim. **Concession/Good Point in a Weak Argument:** Admittedly, Dr. Morgan points out that game-based learning allows for extra practice and instantaneous feedback and that many employees are already gamers. This does not prove that the employees learn more or that the training is effective. **Summation:** However, Dr. Morgan’s support is not strong enough to refute Dr. Robles’s argument.

In conclusion, Dr. Robles’s argument is stronger than Dr. Morgan’s in that the traditional classroom experience teaches necessary soft skills to employees. Dr. Morgan’s argument proves that many employees like playing video games, but she doesn’t prove that game-based training is actually more effective than the person-to-person method.

In this particular prompt, you could easily select the opposing viewpoint if you want to give the students an additional intro example.

**Game-Based Learning Opposing Viewpoint Sample Essay: Dr. Morgan’s Argument is Stronger:**

 In her essay, Dr. Morgan argues that game-based learning is an effective corporate training strategy because many employees are already gamers, and game-based learning is “infinitely repeatable.” However, Dr. Robles contends that game-based learning is merely a fad that will pass quickly. Dr. Morgan has the stronger argument since her essay is based on research and reports more than Dr. Robles’s argument.

 Dr. Morgan, a business professor at Saratoga State University makes a strong argument that game-based learning is an effective corporate training strategy. To prove her claim that many employees are already comfortable with video games, she cites statistics from the Entertainment Software Association, which claims that older people--and even women—play video games. This evidence is strong because it disproves the popular belief that video games are played mainly by teenage boys. One specific statistic is that the average gamer is 37 years old, and, thus, very well may be an employee in the corporate world. She makes the logical conclusion that if many of the employees are “gamers,” then they would better enjoy work training in the form of game-based learning. Secondly, she must prove that game-based learning is effective. Her evidence is a quote from researchers that game-based learning stimulates learners and a recent report that states that game-based learning improves decision-making skills and problem-solving skills. This evidence is strong because it comes from those researching this topic and includes a report that validates her claim. Her argument is not based on opinion but has actual proof to support her claims. Finally, she makes the claim that game-based learning is “infinitely repeatable.” This is a logical conclusion used as evidence of game-based learning’s superiority over traditional training. This argument is sound, so it is impossible to disagree with the notion that game-based learning can easily be repeated by the employee. All in all, Dr. Morgan makes a strong case that game-based learning is an effective corporate training strategy.

 Although Dr. Robles has some strong evidence in his argument, overall, his argument is weaker than Dr. Morgan’s. Dr. Robles’s main argument is that game-based learning is merely a fad. His first claim, that most elearning is not effective, is supported only by his opinion and the opinion of an anonymous writer. He does not cite any credible research or reports to support this claim, and that weakens his argument. Secondly, he claims that game-based learning may actually improve learning but weakens students’ soft skills. It’s ironic that he contradicts his first claim that elearning is not effective by using a quote from a 2013 report that states that students who participated in game-based learning got higher scores on practical activities. He does, however, make his point that game-based learning is not likely to improve the students’ soft skills. Finally, he makes the claim that game-based learning is just old ideas presented in a new way. His evidence includes a quote from the Economist that explains that many aspects of gamification that do work are old ideas repurposed in the games. This evidence does not effectively convince the reader that game-based technology is just a fad. Dr. Robles is admitting that many aspects of gamification do work and are interesting to employees. This does not help his argument that they game-based learning will soon fade away. Thus, his argument is weaker than Dr. Morgan’s.

 In conclusion, Dr. Morgan’s argument is backed by statistics, facts, and logical conclusions. Dr. Robles’s argument is inconsistent—starting out weakly with merely his opinion and the opinion of an anonymous source. He does use one report and a quote from the Economist, a reputable magazine. But, the quotes he uses actually prove that game-based learning is actually quite effective. So, Dr. Morgan’s argument is stronger overall.

**Stronger Argument Body Paragraph Rubric 1:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_1. Write a topic sentence that states why the stronger passage is stronger.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_2. State the writer’s first minor claim and the first piece of evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_3. Explain why this evidence is strong.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_4. State the writer’s second minor claim and the second piece of evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_5. Explain why this evidence is strong.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_6. State the writer’s 3rd minor claim and the third piece of evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_7. Explain why this evidence is strong.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_8. Restate the topic sentence to sum up this large paragraph.

**Weaker Argument Body Paragraph (Rubric 2):**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_1. Write a topic sentence that states why the weaker passage is weak.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_2. State the writer’s first minor claim and the first piece of evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_3. Explain why this evidence is weak.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_4. State the writer’s second minor claim and the second piece of evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_5. Explain why this evidence is weak.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_6. State the writer’s 3rd minor claim and the third piece of evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_7. Explain why this evidence is weak.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_8. Restate the topic sentence to sum up this large paragraph.

Conclusion Checklist:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_9. Restates main claim of which argument is stronger and why.

Instructor Answer Key: Sample Essays

**Sample Parenting Education Extended Response: Ms. Fernandez’s Argument is Stronger**

**Position 1:** In her essay, Ms. Fernandez, APRN, argues that parenting is an important job, that all jobs require training, and that parenting education is effective and can give parents the skills that they need to parent effectively. **Position 2:** On the contrary, Ms. Thomas contends that parenting education infringes on the parents’ right of choice, there are many available options for parenting information, and mandatory parenting education would have funding and enforcement issues. **Thesis: Which Argument/Evidence is Stronger?** Ms. Fernandez’s argument is significantly stronger than Ms. Thomas’s argument, which is not supported by any strong evidence.

**Position/Reason 1:** Ms. Fernandez begins her argument by stating that parenting is an important job, so it should require training. **Evidence 1:** Her evidence for this claim is a list of examples: most jobs--such as those of nurses, barbers, and pilots—require training. **Weak or Strong?** This is a strong example because it is logical. Furthermore, she explains the effects of a lack of training for parents: children and society suffer from this lack of knowledge. **Reason 2**: Next, Ms. Fernandez argues that parents need to be equipped with necessary skills and basic information about parenting. **Evidence 1**: Her first piece of evidence for this claim is an example of a parent knowing why babies cry and learning how to soothe a crying baby safely. **STRONG or Weak?** This is a good example of a specific instance in which parenting education could help a parent prevent a tragedy. In other words, parenting education would help parents prepare for specific scenarios before they occur. **Reason 3:** Finally, Ms. Fernandez contends that parenting education works. **Evidence 1:** One piece of evidence is a statistic from the CDC’s “Safe to Sleep” campaign that states that teaching parents to put their babies to sleep on their backs reduced the number of SIDS deaths since 1994 by 50 percent. **Strong or Weak?** This is a strong piece of evidence because it comes from a well-respected source and proves that babies’ lives have been saved due to education and awareness. **Evidence 2:** Her second piece of evidence for this claim is that “uniformed parenting” hurts the children and society as a whole because another study found that children whose parents used harsh or inconsistent discipline were more likely to have “poor attention spans, low levels of literacy, and anti-social behavior.” **Strong or Weak?** This is another strong piece of evidence because it comes from a specific study and emphasizes the negative effects of a lack of parenting education. **Summation:** These are examples of Ms. Fernandez’s strong argument for mandatory parenting education for new parents.

 **Position:** On the other hand, Ms. Thomas, who has experience raising children (but is not an expert in the field) argues that parents should not have mandatory parenting classes. **Reason 1:** She begins by stating that mandatory parenting classes infringe on the parents’ right to choose how to raise their children. **Evidence 1:** Her first piece of evidence is comparing the mandatory classes to New York City’s limitations on the size of sodas that can be served to people. **Weak or Strong:** This is not a strong argument because the two concepts are not closely related: one is about limiting soda intake, and the other is about caring for children. **Evidence 2:** Her second piece of evidence that freedom of choice is a fundamental value is not very strong because, although the classes would inform parents of proper techniques for the care of children, people can still choose how to parent after taking the classes. **Weak or Strong:** This is also a weak argument because the underlying assumption is that parents should care about the best practices of parenting and implement them in their own parenting styles. Ms. Thomas does not seem to agree with this foundational assumption. **Reason 2:** Secondly, she argues that parents already have many options for help. **Evidence 2:** Her evidence includes parenting books, the internet, family and friends, hospitals, community centers and churches. **Weak or Strong:** Although this is true, this evidence can easily be dismissed when you point out that many parents do not seek the available help because it is not mandatory. **Reason 3:** Finally, Ms. Thomas states that mandatory parenting education would have funding and enforcement issues. **Evidence/Weak or Strong:** These are valid points that should be considered, but Ms. Thomas offers no evidence in support of these claims. **Summation:** Overall, Ms. Thomas’s position is not well-supported with any strong evidence.

 **Conclusion:** Thus, Ms. Fernandez’s argument is the stronger of the two when you consider the research-based evidence that she gives in support of her position.

**Sample Tweens and Cell Phones Intro: Ms. Sidner’s Argument is Stronger**

In her speech, Ms. Sidner argues that parents should wait until their children are 16 to give them a cell phone. She says that cell phones do not make children safer, that cell phones give kids access to bad sites and freedom from parental monitoring, and that kid cell phone use has led to a rise in cyberbullying. On the contrary, Ms. Pendergast, a representative of a cell phone company, argues that most kids are ready for a cell phone by age 10 because most tweens already have cell phones, cell phones allow parents and tweens to contact each other, and cell phones empower kids and give them independence. Ms. Sidner’s argument is stronger because she is a more credible source, and all her claims are backed by research or logical examples.

 **Reason 1:** Ms. Sidner begins by explaining that not having a cell phone actually makes children safer. **Evidence 1:** The first piece of evidence she uses is the logical conclusion that cellphones give parents a false sense of security. She explains that, because parents and children can contact each other quickly, parents believe that their children are safe. This is not always the case. **STRONG or WEAK?** This is a strong point because you can think of many instances in which children are not safe despite having a cell phone. This point is a counterargument to the claim that children with cell phones are safer than children without cell phones. If parents allow their children to experience unsafe situations because they have cell phones with them, then children are certainly not safer with them than without them. **Reason 2:** Secondly, Ms. Sidner contends that allowing children to have cell phones gives them access to bad sites and freedom from parental monitoring. **Evidence 1:** The evidence that Ms. Sidner uses to support this is a study from researcher Elizabeth Englander that states that 90% of kids with cell phones have internet access or text ability. Thus, it is a logical conclusion that these children can access inappropriate sites or receive inappropriate texts. **Strong or Weak?** This evidence is strong because it is based on research and a parent’s focus should be on keeping their children safe and free from dangerous sites or texts. **Reason 3:** Finally, Ms. Sidner points out that kid cell phone use has led to a rise in cyberbullying. **Evidence:** To support this, Ms. Sidner defines cyber and text bullying and uses a statistic as evidence: a study that says 14 to 19% of kids have been victims of cyberbullying. **Strong or Weak?** It is a logical conclusion that, if fewer kids had access to cell phones, fewer of them would experience cyberbullying or cyberbully someone else. **Summation:** Ms. Sidner makes a strong argument that kids should not have cell phones because they do not make students safer, they give students access to inappropriate sites or texts, and they can lead to more cyberbullying.

 **Counterargument/Explanation of Weaker Argument:** On the other hand, Ms. Pendergast does not make a strong argument for giving kids a cell phone. **Discuss credibility**: First, she is not a reputable, unbiased source. She works for a large telecommunications company whose business depends on more and more consumers purchasing and using their products. She has a conflict of interest—she may feel she needs to promote the interests of the company she works for. **Position:** She argues that kids should have a cell phone around age 10. **Reason 1:** Her first claim is that “tween” already have cell phones. **Evidence:** She uses evidence from the National Consumers League, which states that 60% of 8 to 12-year-olds already have cell phones. **Strong or weak:** This is a weak argument because the notion that “everyone is doing it” or “everyone has a cell phone” is a propaganda technique called bandwagon. This statistic may be true, but that does not validate that kids should have a cell phone at this age. If you use the hypothetical situation “If everyone else is jumping off a bridge, should you jump too?” You can easily see the poor logic in this kind of thinking. **Reason 2:** Secondly, Ms. Pendergast contends that cell phones help kids and parents contact each other and give parents and kids a sense of security. **Evidence:** She uses a scenario of a mom who is late to pick up her child from the school. The mom contacts the child through a cell phone. **Strong or Weak:**This evidence is not strong because the mom could have called the school and alerted an adult to watch the child until the parent could arrive. **Reason 3:** Finally, Ms. Pendergast says cell phones empower kids and give them independence. **Evidence:** She uses the evidence of a quote from a lady from Common Sense Media that cell phones allow kids to have fun, old-fashioned experiences and a reference to unnamed psychologists who say 10 to 12 is a good age to let kids earn independence. **Strong or Weak:** This is a valid point, but there are other ways to allow kids to have some independence other than giving them cell phones. This evidence would have been stronger if it came from a named psychologist’s research or a more reputable source than “Common Sense Media,” which is not a widely known source. **Summation:** Overall, the evidence for Ms. Pendergast’s argument is weak.

 **Conclusion:** Overall, Ms. Sidner’s argument is much stronger and better supported than Ms. Pendergast’s. Ms. Sidner is a veteran teacher and a sort of expert on children of this age. She seems more concerned about protecting the kids than Ms. Pendergast. Although both use statistics or research, Ms. Sidner’s research was more relevant to proving her claim.

**Filtering Workplace Internet Access: Ms. Timmons’s Argument is Stronger**

Introduction: Justine Timmons, CEO of Niagara Equipment Corporation, argues that employees of the company should have limited access to internet to the extent of blocking inappropriate sites and social media sites. However, Honoria Bell and many employees of the company counter that inappropriate sites should be blocked or banned but social media sites should not. Ms. Timmons makes the stronger argument because her reasoning is stronger and backed by sources that show some disastrous effects of unlimited internet access.

First, Ms. Timmons contends that unlimited internet access is causing the company to lose money because employees aren’t focused. She supports this claim with Salary.com survey results, which suggest that 64% of employees “cyberslack.” Furthermore, she defines cyberslacking and discusses the effects of cyberslacking—unfocused workers. This is a logical, sound argument that employees’ cyberslacking keeps the company from working efficiently as it could. If workers are not focused on doing their jobs, they will take more time to complete each project or task. Secondly, Ms. Timmons points out that the company emphasizes maintaining a positive workplace, and unfiltered internet access can disrupt that environment. If employees expose others to an offensive or inappropriate website, this can be deemed a hostile work environment, and that could lead to an expensive lawsuit for the company. Another possibility that Ms. Timmons mentions is the notion that social networking sites can also lead to lawsuits and undue financial cost to the company. If employees bully other employees on social networking sites, the company could face a lawsuit, as other companies have. These examples are hypothetical but logical, valid points that should be considered. The company does not want to waste money on unnecessary legal fees—that is the bottom line of why the company wants to filter the internet. Ms. Timmons has made a strong case by using survey results, possible effects, and the experiences of other companies to prove her position.

On the other hand, Ms. Honoria Bell and her fellow employees of the same company want the management to reconsider their plan to filter the internet in the workplace. Her first reason is that most people only cyberslack a little. To prove this, she uses the same survey from salary.com that Ms. Timmons quoted. The survey explains that, although 64% of employees cyberslack, most of them do so only one hour per week. She equates this one-hour-per-week to having a conversation with a colleague at the water cooler. The problem with this evidence is that Ms. Bell assumes that it is acceptable to cyberslack as long as it isn’t for very long. Still, the company is losing the money it pays each employee to “cyberslack” when they could be working. The next piece of evidence she uses is a quote from Author Laura Vanderkam that insinuates that all employees take breaks during the workday. She also mentions a 2009 study that found that employees with internet access are happier and another study by a university that states that employees who web-surf are more refreshed and productive. These examples as evidence do not counter the point that Ms. Timmons was making—that unlimited internet access can cost the company money. She believes an underlying assumption that the employees should be happy at work, and that the employees’ happiness is more important than avoiding the monetary losses of lawsuits. Secondly, she argues that the internet is a communication tool. She uses a brief analogy of an employee taking a brief personal call. This isn’t a strong argument because the company is not taking away all of the employees’ access to communication devices, including their cell phones, work phones, and work email accounts. They are limiting the employees’ access to their personal social media sites. Finally, Ms. Bell urges the company to hire responsible employees and trust them. The evidence she uses is an emotional appeal—don’t treat us like children; set guidelines that we must follow or face the consequences. By using this emotional appeal, Ms. Bell is likening her employer to a “scolding parent.” This is unnecessary and harsh. In most cases, emotional appeals are not as effective as strong, calm, logical arguments. In the end of her argument, she concedes that offensive websites should be banned, so her argument is mainly about social media sites.

Ms. Bell’s argument is weaker and less convincing than Ms. Timmons’s. It seems Ms. Timmons and the company do not want their employees to be unhappy, but they are willing to set limits in order to protect the company from harmful lawsuits and negative publicity. Ms. Bell’s argument is not strong enough to warrant the company taking a huge risk in continuing to allow unfilte