

student sample: Grade 6, Argument

This argument was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were asked to write a letter to their principal about a plan to install video cameras in the classroom for safety reasons. The abbreviated time frame of the assessment (and the consequent lack of opportunity to perform research and revise) explains the absence of information from sources and possibly also the occasional errors.

Video Cameras in Classrooms

You are seated in class as your teacher explains and points things out on the whiteboard. You twitch your hand, accidentally nudging your pencil, which rolls off your desk and clatters to the floor. As you lean over to pick up your pencil, your cell phone falls out of your coat pocket! Luckily you catch it without your teacher seeing, but it is in plain view of the video camera's shiny lens that points straight at you. The classroom phone rings, and after a brief conversation, your teacher walks over to your desk and kneels down beside you. "About that cell phone of yours . . ." How did that get you in trouble? How could it possibly be a good idea to put cameras in classrooms?

When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative. Cameras aren't there because people talk a lot. It is the teacher's job to keep people quiet. If something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened.

If we already have cameras in the halls, why spend the money to get thirty more cameras for all the different classrooms? Our school district already has a low budget, so we would be spending money on something completely unnecessary. There hasn't been camera-worthy trouble in classrooms. Camera-worthy trouble would be bad behavior every time a teacher left the room. There is no reason to install cameras that might just cause trouble, both for the students and for the budget.

Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room. Some students get nervous and flustered, trying hard to stay focused on their work with a camera focused on them. 90% of students claim that they do better work when they are calmer, and cameras are not going to help. Other students look at cameras as a source of entertainment. These students will do things such as wave at the camera, make faces, or say hi to the people watching through the camera. This could be a big distraction for others who are trying to learn and participate in class. Still other students will try to trick the camera. They will find a way to block the lens or do something that the camera will not be likely to

catch. All of these different students will be distracted by the cameras in their classrooms.

Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.

Annotation of Video Cameras in Classrooms

The writer of this piece:

• **introduces a claim (stated late in the essay).**

- . . . *I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.*

* **acknowledges alternate or opposing claims.**

- *Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems.*

* **supports the claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, demonstrating an understanding of the topic.**

- *[Cameras are not necessary because] [i]f something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened.*

- . . . *we already have cameras in the halls . . .*
Our school district already has a low budget . . .

• **uses words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among the claim, reasons, and evidence.**

- *If . . . already . . . why . . . so . . . Some students . . . Other students . . . These students . . . All of these different students . . .*

• **establishes and maintains a formal style.**

- *When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative.*

- *Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room.*

- **provides a concluding statement that follows from and supports the argument presented.**
 - *Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.*

- **demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English (with occasional errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message).**