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Sound Reasoning

Strong arguments use sound reasoning and evidence to support any claims. A carefully constructed written argument includes the following elements:

- **claim:** the writer's position on an issue or problem
- **reasons:** logical statements that explain an action or belief
- **evidence:** facts, examples, quotations, experiences, and other pieces of information that support the claim
- **counterargument:** reasons and evidence given to disprove an opposing viewpoint

Read the following argument and answer the questions.

Should Middle Schools Ban Cell Phones?

Many middle schools across the country are debating whether to ban cell phones during school hours. Some schools have already created "phone-free" policies, requiring students to keep their phones in lockers or special pouches throughout the day.

Principal Johnson at Lincoln Middle School argues that banning phones improves student focus. "Since implementing our phone-free policy last year, teachers report 30% fewer classroom disruptions and test scores have improved by an average of 12%," she stated. However, parent representative Mrs. Garcia disagrees. "Cell phones provide safety in emergencies. When there

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was a power outage last winter, students with phones could contact their parents immediately. Taking away phones leaves students vulnerable," she explains.

Student council president Malik offers a compromise: "Maybe students could keep phones in backpacks during class and only use them during lunch or between classes. This way, we have both focus during lessons and access when needed."

The school board will vote next month on whether to implement a district-wide cell phone policy after considering arguments from all sides.

1. What claim does Principal Johnson make, and what evidence does she provide to support it?

2. What logical fallacy might be present in Mrs. Garcia's argument?

3. Which argument demonstrates the strongest reasoning and why?

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Sound Reasoning - Answer Key

1. What claim does Principal Johnson make, and what evidence does she provide to support it?

Principal Johnson claims banning phones improves student focus. Her evidence includes 30% fewer classroom disruptions and 12% improvement in test scores after implementing the policy.

2. What logical fallacy might be present in Mrs. Garcia's argument?

Mrs. Garcia uses an appeal to fear fallacy by focusing on a rare emergency situation to argue against the policy, overemphasizing risks rather than addressing everyday impacts.

3. Which argument demonstrates the strongest reasoning and why?

Malik's argument shows strongest reasoning because it acknowledges concerns from both sides and offers a practical compromise that addresses both classroom focus and safety needs.