1. Focus

Explain Using Description to Flesh Out Arguments

Say: When I write a persuasive essay, I want to sway readers’ opinions toward my own. To do this, I can’t just repeat my opinion over and over. Instead, I need to support my argument with evidence that my point of view is best. I can use descriptive language to provide details that support my argument. Today I’m going to show you how to use description to flesh out, or support, your arguments in a persuasive essay. You will learn to add details to your arguments so that readers have a reason to back you and your opinion.

Model How Writers Use Description to Flesh Out Arguments

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for descriptions as you read the text aloud.

Modeling Text

Children lose knowledge and skills during the long summer break. Every week that students are not in school, they are forgetting some of the facts, strategies, and skills they learned. “Summer learning loss” is a documented phenomenon. Studies show that summer learning loss equaled at least one month of instruction as measured by standardized test scores.

Say: In this section of text, the writer argues that “children lose knowledge and skills during the long summer break.” To support this argument, the author uses some descriptive evidence. She paints a picture of students forgetting things “every week they are not in school.” Then she gives the problem a name, summer learning loss, and further describes the phenomenon by telling about the studies showing that students lost knowledge as measured by test scores. The writer’s use of descriptive details has helped me understand the argument. Rather than telling me over and over what I must believe, she has given me some further details that support her argument. We can remember this strategy of describing evidence when we write our own persuasive essays.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Description to Flesh Out Arguments

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Explain that the text is an argument that could be improved with the addition of descriptive details.

**Practice Text**

Dogs should be allowed in school.

Ask students to work with partners to write a description that fleshes out the argument and gives evidence why dogs should be allowed in school. Invite students to describe situations in which dogs being in school could help students, such as by keeping them safe or by keeping them happy. Pairs of students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain how their additions of descriptive detail flesh out the argument.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain the word choices they made to add descriptive details in support of the practice text statement. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write or revise their persuasive essays.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that writers use description to present and flesh out their arguments in a persuasive essay. A good persuasive essay uses facts and evidence to make a case. As you write your persuasive essay, remember to use descriptions of evidence to support your facts and to help readers understand your arguments.

Ask students to identify a section of their persuasive essays where they could add descriptive details to support an argument. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their persuasive essays in which they describe evidence in support of an argument.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Work with small groups of students to help them understand the concept of making an argument for or against. Work with the practice text and use words, gestures, and pictures to discuss with students both sides of the argument—why dogs should be allowed in school and why they shouldn’t be allowed.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Provide sentence frames such as the following to help students add description to the argument:

A dog in school might _______.
Imagine how a dog could _______.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: description/la descripción; essay/el ensayo; persuasive/persuasivo(a); point of view/el punto de vista.