Use Problem-and-Solution and Descriptive Text Structures

1. Focus

Explain Problem-and-Solution and Descriptive Text Structures

Say: Persuasive essays use more than one text structure. The primary structure is problem-and-solution: the author presents the problem or issue and suggests a solution or actions that can be taken. But as the author is presenting the facts and evidence to make a case, the descriptive text structure is often used.

Model Identifying the Problem-and-Solution and Descriptive Text Structures

Ask students to listen as you read (or reread) the first paragraph on page 8 of “Lengthen the School Year Before It’s Too Late!”

Say: In the first two sentences, the author states the problem: Students are not currently learning enough in school to compete in a global economy. The next sentence reads, “How can they achieve this?” This question tells me the author is going to propose her solution right away. She says, “To start, they should continue their formal education during the summer.” These two statements provide the frame for the problem-and-solution text structure.

Say: The rest of the opening paragraph begins to flesh out the author’s argument. She describes how most students currently use their summer vacations. She says they “fritter away their summer vacations in unsupervised, unproductive, and unhealthy activities.” This vivid description is thought-provoking. If that is really how students are spending their summers, I would have to agree with the author that it would be better for them to be in school! She contrasts this description with one of other countries, where the school year is longer and students “are hard at work” and “will be rewarded in the end.”

2. Rehearse

Practice Identifying the Descriptive Text Structure

Read the second paragraph on page 11 and ask students to identify examples of the descriptive structure “couch potatoes, video-game addicts, and aimless Internet surfers.”
Create a Class Text Structures Anchor Chart

Ask students to listen as you reread the mentor text. Have them identify each argument and the description that supports it. On chart paper, list the examples students find. Post this Problem-and-Solution and Descriptive Text Structures anchor chart so that students can refer to it throughout the unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Without more time in school, students “will not master the . . . skills they need to compete for jobs in the global economy.”</td>
<td>“They should continue their formal education during the summer.”</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Arguments</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students misuse their time during summer vacation.</td>
<td>1. “fritter away”; “unsupervised, unproductive, and unhealthy”</td>
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<td>2. Summer vacation originated in the 19th century when kids helped do farm work; times have changed.</td>
<td>2. “It’s the 21st century”; “few family farms”</td>
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<td>3. Kids lose knowledge and skills during the break.</td>
<td>3. Summer learning loss is equal to at least one month of instruction; students score lower on tests at the end of the break.</td>
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<td>4. Kids in the U.S. are falling behind kids in countries where the school year is longer.</td>
<td>4. The U.S. ranks fifteenth out of twenty-seven countries in reading, and twenty-first out of thirty in science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kids in the U.S. are less prepared to compete for jobs in the global economy.</td>
<td>5. The fastest-growing career fields require strong math, science, and reading skills.</td>
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Practice Using the Problem-and-Solution Text Structure

Turn and talk. Ask students to discuss with partners a problem that they might write a persuasive essay about. Have them explain the problem and their solutions, using description to support their arguments. If your class includes students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Problems and Solutions

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the problem, solutions, and descriptions they discussed with their partners.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Role-play different problems and invite ELs to act out possible solutions. Problems could include breaking a pencil point, tearing a piece of paper, or having an untied shoelace.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair students with fluent English speakers during the practice activity. Provide sentence frames to help students talk about their problems and solutions:

- The problem is ______.
- One reason this is a problem is ______.
- One solution could be ______.

**All Levels**

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: description/la descripción; position/la posición; problem/el problema; solution/la solución.