Elaborate on the Problem in a Persuasive Letter

1. Focus

Explain Elaborating on the Problem

Say: We write persuasive letters to tell our position on a problem or an issue. We want to make sure that our audience understands the problem. So we need to present our case clearly and thoroughly. We need to share how we feel about the problem, but we need to do more than that. We also need to explain why the problem is serious. We have to give reasons or examples. When we draft, we need to write all of our reasons for our position. Today we will practice expressing our feelings about a problem and giving examples of the problem.

Model Elaborating on the Problem

Display the sample text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Say: Listen as I read aloud two drafts that explain a problem.

Modeling Text

Ask: How did each writer feel about the problem? (Allow responses.) Which draft did a better job of explaining the problem? Allow responses. If necessary, read aloud the sentences again.

Say: When I read the excerpt from the first letter, I certainly know how the writer feels. The writer says, “I am very disgusted.” I also understand what the problem is—the need for new playground equipment. But I don’t really get any sense of how serious the problem is. There are no examples. The writer just says there isn’t enough equipment and what they do have is old. When I read the second excerpt, however, I can see the problem in my mind. I see the dented slide. I can visualize the two swings and all of these kids waiting for a turn. The situation really seems pathetic. And I totally empathize, or connect, with the writer’s point of view. I really understand why this playground is a disappointment. I would feel disappointed, too, if I were a student at that school.
2. Rehearse

Practice Elaborating on a Problem

Distribute BLM 5 or display it using the interactive whiteboard resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem:</th>
<th>Detail 1:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Our school needs a new library.</td>
<td>Detail 2:</td>
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<td>Detail 3:</td>
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<td>Detail 4:</td>
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Elaborating on a Problem (BLM 5)

Ask students to imagine that they attend a school that has a very inadequate library. Invite students to work in small groups to generate examples to elaborate on this problem so that an audience of readers would understand the seriousness of the problem. Remind them that expressing their feelings about the situation is not enough. They need to provide examples to support their positions.

Share and Discuss Elaborating on a Problem

Bring groups together and invite them to read aloud the examples they drafted for why the school needs a new library. Record their ideas on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Discuss the feelings students expressed and the examples they gave to support their feelings.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned how to do two important things in drafting a persuasive letter. We learned to express how we feel about a situation or issue. And we learned to give examples to support how we feel. When we draft a persuasive letter, this is what we need to focus on in our draft—getting our feelings and examples on paper.

Encourage students to apply the strategy of elaborating on a problem during independent writing time, as appropriate. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share a problem and their ideas for elaborating on that problem. Encourage them to describe examples they generated during independent writing time.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

During the “Practice Elaborating on a Problem” practice activity, work with beginning ELs to build the concept of a problem. Invite them to draw pictures of problems in a school library. Work with them to write a phrase under each picture to describe the problem.

Intermediate and Advanced

Provide simple sentence frames to help students talk about problems with a school library:

- The library is ______.
- One problem is ______.
- Another problem is ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: detail/el detalle; emotions/las emociones; persuade/persuadir; problem/el problema.