

administrators might argue that poor teaching is the cause; teachers may point to poor parenting and discipline problems in the classroom; parents may point to bullying on school grounds or drug abuse; others might point to the tests themselves as the cause. The search for this cause, as it turns out, is a heated debate.

Academia prepares people to understand causes in different fields—that is, that the study of a particular discipline gives students the critical perspectives necessary for asking the right questions within their fields. But despite the particular field or discipline, the process of discovery (of focusing and analyzing) is much the same, and the act of communicating one's discoveries is key in every situation.

The chapter readings will provide insight into necessary writing strategies. For example, each essay in this chapter puts forth a particular claim about what caused or causes something—about *why* something happens. The author might not state it this way, but readers could write down the main claim as *X causes Y*, filling in X with the *cause* and Y with the *behavior, event, or trend*. The entire essay then helps readers understand and possibly accept that claim. As you read, identify the X and Y parts of the main claim and the particular support strategies (examples, explanations, facts, statistics, and so on) that help readers accept it. After reading the essays, you can begin looking for a particular relationship in one of two ways—go to the Point of Contact section to find a problem from your everyday life, or read the following essays and choose one of the Ideas for Writing that follow. After finding a subject, go to the Analysis section to begin developing the evaluation.