

Writing Instruction for English Learners: Practical Approaches from the Comprehensive Writing Instruction Research Project

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Resources

Framework for Comprehensive Writing Instruction

- Models of writing: Underscore the complex mental processes involved
 - Parallel to teaching reading: PA, phonics, advanced decoding, text reading fluency, text structures, textual analysis & strategic processing, vocabulary, etc...Do we do the same in writing?
 - Effective instruction in component parts & holistic text writing in multiple genres
 - Explicit instruction + carefully constructed guided practice
 - Ongoing assessment of critical skills & intervention?
- Research in writing instruction: Not nearly as robust as in reading; but, many solid findings to guide instruction
- CWI Project: Grades 1, 3, 5: Design, implement, assess, refine writing instruction that “operationalizes” findings in Graham/Harris meta-analyses & address CCSS in writing
 - Framework for CWI:
 - Transcription +
 - Written Language Skills +
 - Process Strategies
 - Genre Writing (Text Structure Knowledge + Genre Elements)
 - CWI Instruction
 - Explicit Instruction
 - Guided Practice Featuring Generative Writing (students actively compose)
 - Model Texts
 - Shared – Paired -- Independent
 - Formative assessment, rubrics, specific feedback
 - Opportunities to Assimilate (i.e., multiple rounds of practice)

Transcription

Research:

Graham and colleagues (1997) found that together, spelling and handwriting accounted for 25% and 66% of the variance in compositional quality and fluency, respectively, in Grades 1–3.

Graham, McKeown, Kihara, & Harris (2012): on average, elementary students specifically taught transcription skills perform about one-half of a standard deviation (ES = .55) higher on measures of writing quality.

Repeated Writing (K-1/Intervention):

- 1) Explicit instruction/practice forming focal letter/s
- 2) Model sentence that contains letters:
Ana asked about a bat and a ball.
- 3) Students copy sentence below for 40/60 seconds. Stop, count letters.
- 4) Move to next line, copy again, try to write 3 more letters X 2

Sentences from Observation: Building Sentence Sense

- Purpose:
 - a. Learn sentence by sound & use – think them, share them, listen to them – rather than abstract language (complete thought, etc...)
 - b. Develop sentence “sense” and fluency
- Sentences from Observation – implementation

T: “Look around the room and find something that you want to write about”

S: a book

T: Good, think of a sentence that contains what you found. Think of one sentence.

S: A book?

T: You found a book. Tell me in a sentence. (Model if necessary)

S: I found a book. (1)

T: Good. I found a book. (2) That is a sentence. Tell us again. (3) T writes on board and asks S to read. (4)

Repeat with 3-4 more students = students hearing 20 sentences

Students can go and write their sentence if appropriate. I like oral rehearsal with adult providing word lines when needed to help students ‘attack’ each word:

“I found a book.” = _ _ _ _ _ .

Given Word Sentences: Deliberate Thinking about Sentences

- Purpose: Deliberate about sentences; intentional sentence crafting
- Implementation:
 1. Level 1: Think of a sentence that uses the word (rain). Write it in your head. Who has a sentence? ... “Rain is good for plants.” Great!

Students can go and write their sentence if appropriate. I like oral rehearsal with adult providing word lines when needed to help students ‘attack’ each word:

“I found a book.” = _ _ _ _ _ .

2. Level 2: Specified length: “Rain is good for plants. How many words does that have? 5? Yes. Can you think of a sentence that has 5 words and uses the word rain?” (4? 6?)
3. Level 2: Specified length & position: “Think of a 4-word sentence with rain in the 1st position...” (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th)
4. 4-5: Vocab, content, grammar
 - Write an 8 word sentence that begins with although.
 - Write of a 6-8 word sentence using the word ‘den’ in the 1st half
 - Write a 8+ word sentence that uses an “ing” verb in the 2nd half
 - (On hot summer days, I like to go swimming at the Rec Center.)

Sentence Imitating: Complex Sentences w/Although

- **Although** is an excellent word to use to start a complex sentence. It can be challenging to use correctly, but when you do you, you sound very smart!
- We use **Although** to show that even though one thing happens or is true, another thing also happens or is true. Below are examples of an “**Although**” sentence.

Although I like Halloween, Christmas is my favorite holiday.

Although my sister is only six, she can still run a mile.

- Try a complex sentence that begins with **Although**. Make sure that there are two things going on in your sentence. Be ready to share.
- Now, you are going to write a triple sentence session about the ideas of **rain** and an **athletic event**. One of the sentences needs to be a complex sentence that begins with **Although**. Here is an example:

Although it was raining this afternoon, my soccer game was still fun. We all slipped and slid around the field. When the game was all done, I was so muddy!

Be ready to share.

Sentence Sessions: Multi-Sentence Cohesion

- Purpose:
 - a. Developing sentence cohesion; learning to ‘stretch’ a main idea across sentences; key step toward cohesive paragraphs
 - b. Familiar context for sentence variety practice
- Implementation:
 - c. Approximately 10 minutes (more during the first few experiences)
 - d. Initial period: 2-3 times a week

Basic Sequence:

- T: “Think of a sentence using the ideas of an older person and weather.”
- S: An old man was walking in the snow.
- Good. Everyone listen to Martha’s sentence. Martha, say it again. (Student repeats.) Now, what do you see?
- S: It’s snowing and there’s this old man who is walking; he’s all bundled up.
- T: Okay, I want you to keep working with those 2 ideas, but now you are going to stretch them across two sentences. Write two sentences in your mind, and make them paint a bigger picture of your main idea.
- S: The old man was walking in the snow. He slipped on some ice and fell.
- T: Great! say it again...
- T: Okay, let’s stop and write our two sentences. (first couple of times)
- T: Let’s hear what a couple of you wrote...
- T: Okay, now, I am going to give you another sentence. I want you to take your ideas and stretch them across three sentences. So, now you can say more...

Sentence Separating

Many times when kids write compound sentences, they try to put too much into one sentence. This makes for “overstuffed” or “run-on” sentences that can be confusing to read. Now that we have learned to use compound sentences, it is important that we also learn not to “overstuff” them. How does this sentence sound?

My friends and I went to the Rec Center, and we went in the pool and later we sat in the jacuzzi.

It is **overstuffed**, right? There is too much in it for one sentence! We want to avoid **overstuffed** sentences, or, if we do write one, how to **revise** or fix it up. Here is one simple idea that helps us avoid **overstuffed sentences**:

Make sure your sentences only have 1 or 2 parts.

Now, older writers actually write many sentences that have 3 or more parts. But, for kids, that can be very hard to do. So, we want to stick to 1-part or 2-part sentences. How many parts do you think our overstuffed sentence has?

My friends and I went to the Rec Center, and we went in the pool and later we sat in the jacuzzi.

If you said 3, you were correct!

My friends and I went to the Rec Center, and we went in the pool and later we sat in the jacuzzi.

The easiest way to fix an overstuffed sentence is to make it into two sentences. Almost always, one bad overstuffed sentence will make two (or more!) good sentences. When we turn one overstuffed sentence into two or more sentences, we call this **sentence separating**. How could we separate this overstuffed sentence into two good sentences, with one being a compound sentence? Our sentence sounds good like this:

My friends and I went to the Rec Center, and we went in the pool. Later, we sat in the jacuzzi.

Here is exactly what we did to separate this overstuffed sentence into two good sentences:

1. We **put in a period** after the first two parts of the sentence. In other words, we made this a good compound sentence.
2. We **took out** the second **AND**! Many overstuffed sentences have too many “and’s” or other joining words! When we separate them, we almost always end up taking one or more out.

We started the second sentence with the word after the “and” and capitalized it, “**Later...**”

Okay, it is time for you all to try to separate an overstuffed sentence! So, copy the sentence below, but as you do fix it up. Remember, you will...

- 1) Add a period
- 2) Take out at least one **and** or other joining word (**but, or, so**)
- 3) Start the new sentence with a capital letter.

My family went driving in the mountains to see the aspen trees and we reached the forest and the leaves were bright orange and yellow.

Power Writing/Typing

- II. Purpose:
 - a. Writing fluency
 - b. Basic revision/process awareness
- III. Implementation:
 - a. Approximately 15 minutes (more during the first few experiences)
 - b. Initial period: 2 times a week
- IV. Basic Sequence:

- Teacher tells students that mature writers are good at ‘getting started,’ that they can easily get ideas down on paper quickly and that then they can go back and improve or expand those ideas to make their writing the best it can be. Then, tell students that they are going to learn to do the same thing – to get some ideas down on paper quickly and then go back and make them better, and that this will really help them to be better writers.
- Write 2 words on board (e.g.: horse/mountain; vocab/spelling words; content words)
- Students select 1 word, write as much as they can as well as they can in 90 seconds. Teacher also writes during each round in order to be able to model revision later...
- Students count words, teacher quickly surveys the class and records number on chart, stressing that students are not competing against one another but against themselves.

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
0-5			
6-10			
11-15			
16-20			

- Rounds 2-3 with new word pairs
- Students select round either round 2/3 text and rewrite it to make it their best writing, i.e., as if for a grade, to post on the board, take home to parents... (3-4 minutes to revise – teacher can suggest that they might change some of their sentences to sound better; add some information to beginning, middle, or end; make the ideas clearer; improve some words; etc... OR revise your power writing to make it a ‘perfect paragraph.’)
- Debrief/model revision: Ask students to explain what they did to the first draft (students hear that revision strategies vary by piece...); teacher can model various revision moves with own text in order to help students build a basic revision ‘tool box.’

BWIP Formative Writing Assessment

- A. Task: Students write on a basic prompt for 3-5 minutes. “Write about what you like to do on a sunny day. You have 5 minutes. Try to make it your best writing.” Every 6 weeks, students write again on a comparable prompt (Write about your favorite thing to do outside).
- B. Analysis:
- a. **Number of words**
 - b. Average number of **words per sentence** (divide writing into grammatically correct sentences; if this is not possible, no score given)
 - c. Number of **compound & complex sentences (with a dependent adverb clause) / total sentences** (compound-complex sentences counted for both; multiple compounding counted as 1 compound)
 - d. **Sentences / Non-Sentences** (as written/punctuated – non-sentences include fragments, run-ons, grammatical flaws that severely disrupt meaning)
 - e. **Capital letters** – Sentence caps, all proper nouns – correct / possible
 - f. **Commas** – correct/incorrect or missing (include all correct commas; incorrect = misuses of commas and those missing from compound/complex sentences, series)
 - g. **Cohesion/ideas**
 - 0 – *LIST LIKE*. Sentences don’t build a common idea; list like, i.e., 1 idea = 1 and possibly 2 sentences (almost no elaboration across sentences); no transitions/connectives
I like go outside when its sunny and Play soccer. Football is a great game. It is fun to ride bikes.
 - 1 – *SOME DEVELOPMENT*, Less list like. At least 1-2 ideas have some elaboration (1 idea = 2+ or more sentences); some transitions/ connectives
Two kids went to the store and bought some things then they went home to eat. They had Cheetos and Coke. Then went outside and played. They played soccer in the yard.
 - 2 – *DEVELOPED*. 1 or more ideas are stretched across 3+ sentences in a focused way, thus appearing “well developed;” most transitions between sentences and ideas are smooth and connectives are employed.
My brother and I play both play on soccer teams. We like to practice in the backyard. We practice the drills we learn with our teams. After we set up goals take turns shooting.
 - 3 – *EXTREMELY WELL DEVELOPED*. 1 main idea is developed in detail in 5+ sentences. Transitions between sentences and ideas are smooth and connectives are employed. Writing stays very focused, and writer gives many important details so that reader can appreciate scene, event, or concept.
- C. Uses:
- a. Scores are recorded on a class chart and analyzed for class/student trends
 - b. Areas of need discussed with individual writers or small groups (e.g., commas).
 - c. Possible use as a screener for writing intervention

Autobiographical Narrative Planning: B-M-E Timeline (1st)

Pick an event that was exciting, fun, scary, made you feel proud, or that you really want to remember. Plan your narrative by thinking about and then drawing and labeling what happened at the beginning, middle, and end.

BEGINNING (who? when? where?)

MIDDLE (What happened? What was the most exciting part?)

END (How things wrapped up)

Autobiographical Narrative Planning 1: 4W + C & RACE Timeline

4W + C Planning helps you get all your ideas ready to write an excellent autobiographical narrative. The **4 W's** are Where, When, Who and What. The **C** stands for "Climax," because every narrative is only as good as its climax!

1. Write a phrase that names your event or experience
- 2) Write **WHERE** it happened
- 3) Write **WHEN** it happened
- 4) Write **WHO** was there or involved
- 4) Write several phrases about **WHAT** happened
- 5) Write a sentence about the **CLIMAX** – the most exciting or important part of the event

Autobiographical Narrative Planning: RACE Timeline

R --
I
S
I --
N
G
--
A
C
T --
I
O
N --

--
C --
L --
I --
M --
A --
X --
--

E --
N --
D --

Autobiographical Narrative Planning: RACE Timeline 5th

R -- Packed up for the lake
I
S
I -- Arrived and ran down to beach and into water
N
G -- Swam out to rock
A
C
T -- Climbed rock - hard because slippery
I
O
N --

C -- Hesitated to jump
L -- Sierra jumped
I -- I knew I had to!
M -- Threw myself off and into water
A -- We kept trying new jumps
X --

E -- Back up to car, very tired
N -- Thinking about great day on way home
D --

BWIP Autobiographical Narrative Revision and Editing

REVISION is making changes to your text to make it better. Think about the model autobiographical narratives we have read and what made them good. How can you change your AN to make it more like the models in these ways?

Here are 4 possible ways to revise your AN. Read your AN and decide which of these ways would improve it the most. Pick **1** of these ways to revise your AN and try them out. Check the one that you used.

- _____ Add 2-4 more sentences to your description of the setting or the main actors (or both!). Try to help the reader picture the setting or characters in their head.
- _____ Add 2-4 sentences to your description of the climax. These sentences should add detail to and slow down the climax even more so that the reader can enjoy it.
- _____ Add dialogue between two or more characters at an important moment in the AN. Try to use the dialogue to help readers understand what the actors were thinking, feeling, or learning at that moment.
- _____ Add 2-4 sentences to your description of the wrap up. Make sure that these sentences show how the main actor/s felt about the experience and why they will remember it.

EDITING is reading over your text carefully to correct sentence, spelling, and punctuation errors.

Use the following checklist to edit your paper. When you have completed an editing task as best as you can, place a check by it.

- _____ **PARAGRAPH INDENTATION:** New paragraphs are indented.
- _____ **SENTENCE PUNCTUATION:** Each sentence begins with a capital letter and has an ending mark.
- _____ **CAPITALIZATION:** Proper nouns begin with a capital.
- _____ **COMMA USE:** All two-part sentences have a comma.
- _____ **OTHER PUNCTUATION:** Check for apostrophes in contractions (example: don't). If you used dialogue, check with me to make sure that you used the correct punctuation.

CWI Narrative Rubric 3rd & 5th – 10 point scale

	0	1	2
Setting and Characters	Minimal-to-no description of where and when the narrative takes place and the characters involved	Description, with some details or images, of where and when the event takes place and the characters involved	
Rising Action and wrap up	Minimal-to-no description of what happens before main events or why they happen and what happens after them	Description, with some details/sequence of events, of what happens before main events or why they happen and what happens after them	Effective description of what happens before main events or why they happen and what happens after them; may include basic sense of rising action and how the actors felt or why the experience was memorable
Climax	Main event or action told quickly in very few sentences	Main event or action told in some detail using more sentences +1	Main event or action stretched out over many sentences with great detail +1
Written Language Skills: Paragraphing, Sentence Variety, Diction	Characterized primarily by: No paragraphing & Mostly simple sentences: Sounds choppy/ repetitious. Word choice doesn't stand out in any way.	Characterized primarily by: Paragraph structure and/or more than one kind of sentence but relatively high % of simple sentences and moderate "flow." Some good word choice (occasional use of very appropriate or interesting words).	Characterized primarily by: Multiple well-organized paragraphs and effective use of multiple kinds of sentences (for grade level). Good word choice (use of very appropriate or interesting words).
Written Language Skills: Mechanics (sentence & other punctuation, grammar, high frequency spelling)	A number of non-sentences; Inconsistent use of basic punctuation (capital letters, sentence end, commas in series, apostrophes in contractions). Significant grammar problems (S-V agreement, tense, etc...) and/or with HFW spelling	Reasonably high percentage of correct sentences and consistent use of basic punctuation (capital letters, sentence end, commas in series, apostrophes in contractions). Few grammar problems. Little/poor attempts at advanced punctuation (dialogue). Few problems with HFW spelling.	High percentage of correct sentences and consistent use of basic punctuation (capital letters, sentence end, commas in series, apostrophes in contractions) and reasonable attempts at further punctuation (commas in compound/ complex sent.,) and/or approximations of advanced punctuation (e.g., dialogue). Few problems with HFW spelling.

Story Analysis Essay Planning Sheet

Paragraph 1: 4-6 Sentence Plot Summary

Think of the story in 4-5 main scenes – the main events or actions in the story. Then, write brief phrases about each scene in the boxes.

Main characters and scene 1 (rising action)	Captain and crew begin pleasant voyage
Scene 2 (rising action)	
Scene 3 (climax)	
Scene 4 (climax)	
Scene 5 (wrap up)	

Paragraph 2: Character Analysis

Write the name of the main characters on the lines and their main traits in the boxes on the left. Then, in brief phrases, describe the evidence for those traits in the boxes on the right.

Character 1: _____

Character Traits

Evidence from Story

Character 2: _____

Character Traits

Evidence from Story

Literary Analysis Essay Rubric: 10-point scale

	0	1	2
Text Organization	Fails to include text info (author, title, etc...); Summary – is unwieldy or a complete retelling Few or no sentences addressing focal element	Includes text info (author, title, etc...); Summary captures main plot elements without complete retelling; Includes sentences discussing focal element +1	Includes text info (author, title, etc...); Summary thorough but concise; Includes significant discussion of focal element +1
Analysis of Literacy Element	Few or no sentences addressing focal element; little or no specific evidence from text.	Analytic claims related to focal element; specific evidence from text that provides some support for claims +1	Insightful claims related to focal element; specific evidence from text that provides strong support for claims; claims represent thoughtful analysis of text +1
Written Language Skills: Paragraphing, Sentence Variety, Diction	Characterized primarily by: No paragraphing & Mostly simple sentences: Sounds choppy/ repetitious. Word choice doesn't stand out in any way.	Characterized primarily by: Paragraph structure and/or more than one kind of sentence but relatively high % of simple sentences and moderate "flow." Some good word choice (occasional use of very appropriate or interesting words).	Characterized primarily by: Multiple well-organized paragraphs and effective use of multiple kinds of sentences (for grade level). Good word choice (use of very appropriate or interesting words).
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1st Grade Character Trait “Essay”

1. Title-“Is About” Sentence:

The Paper Bag Princess is about a princess who saves a prince from a dragon.

2. Character Trait + Evidence (“when...” or “because...” Sentences:

Princess Elizabeth is brave when she follows the dragon to save Ronald. She is clever when she tricks the dragon and makes him go to sleep.

3. “How it Ends” Sentence:

At the end, Princess Elizabeth calls Ronald a bum.

The Paper Bag Princess is about a princess who saves a prince from a dragon. Princess Elizabeth is brave when she follows the dragon to save Ronald. She is clever when she tricks the dragon and makes him go to sleep. At the end, Princess Elizabeth doesn't marry Ronald.