Proven practices

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Instructional decisions for individuals with learning disabilities need no longer be a matter of opinion but can be grounded in effective practices that research has shown to be successful.

"*Individuals with learning disabilities need specially designed, research-based instruction in order to fulfill their potential and succeed in today's world.*"

There are a number of powerful reasons for adopting this theme. First, in many educational institutions across the nation, individuals with learning disabilities are not receiving instruction that has been specially designed for them. Frequently, they are in the same classrooms, receiving the same instruction as their peers without disabilities, with no tailoring of instruction to their particular difficulty with learning. Unfortunately, few accommodations are made in these settings to support their learning and to minimize the effects of their disabilities.

Secondly, we have available to us many more effective practices than are commonly used in classrooms. There are research-based materials, methods, and information for teaching individuals with learning disabilities both skills and strategies to enable them to become successful learners. While many of these "best practices" were unavailable 25 years ago, they have been validated through extensive research, and they are available today.

As a result of rigorous research, we can teach the large majority of students with learning disabilities how to read, write, spell, do math, use social skills, advocate for themselves, and carry out complex tasks associated with success in secondary and post-secondary educational programs. For example, they can be taught how to write well-organized paragraphs and themes, as

Editor's note: Jean Schumaker, associate director of the Center for Research on Learning, is a past president of the Division of Learning Disabilities, a division of the Council for Exceptional Children. During her tenure as president, she recommended that the DLD executive board adopt an overarching theme to guide its thinking, planning, communication, and work for DLD. This article is an excerpt from one Jean wrote for the DLD Times *in Fall 1999 explaining the power of the theme, which was unanimously approved by the board.*

well as how to study for and take tests in rigorous secondary classes. Students with learning disabilities who enter the ninth grade reading at the fourth-grade level can be taught to read at the ninth-grade level. They can take part in and succeed in required courses at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

In other words, instructional decisions for individuals with learning disabilities need no longer be a matter of opinion but can be grounded in effective practices that research has shown to be successful. This presents us, as a field, with a moral imperative: ensuring that individuals with learning disabilities receive instruction that is appropriate to their needs.

Inside: Sentence Writing ideas

Becoming a WORDSMITH using "WRITER"
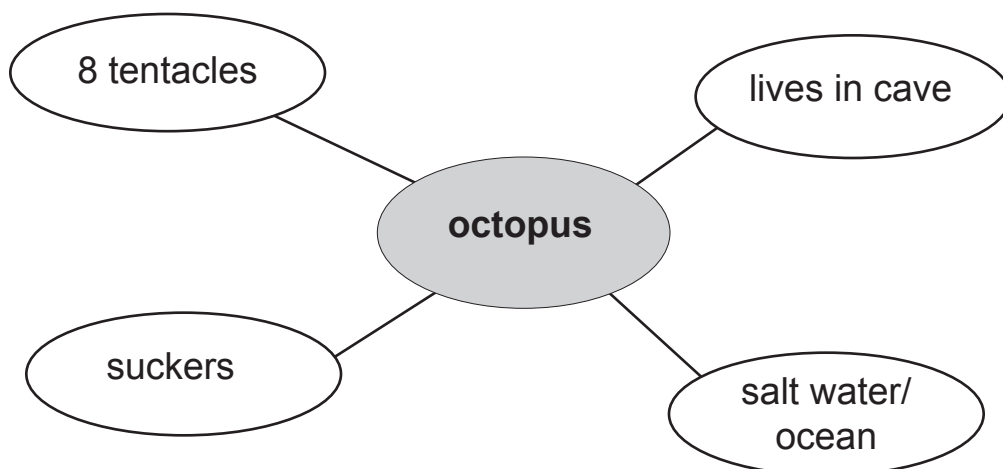## Writing "Meaningful Sentences"

Susan K. Woodruff, a SIM Trainer from Muskegon, Michigan, developed this activity to complement instruction in the *Sentence Writing Strategy*. Sue says that we teach students structure when we teach them the PENS steps, but we don't always give them a lot of content to go with the structure. This activity combines content and structure to help students write meaningful sentences. The activity can facilitate vocabulary acquisition by allowing students to manipulate ideas and concepts about specific vocabulary words. This is a terrific method of helping students learn and review content-specific vocabulary, Sue says. She adapted this activity from one called "Meaningful Sentences" that she learned at a Talent Development High School Workshop for Student Team Literature. Johns Hopkins University devised the webbing method to teach students to write truly meaningful sentences.

Web your word

Read the parts

Integrate ideas using PENS

Take time to visualize

Error-proof by boxing and underlining

Realize your Wordsmith potential!

The WRITE Strategy

1. Try the activity with an easy, concrete word first. Teach students the WRITE strategy by first showing them how to brainstorm and web ideas with teammates.

    For example, you might choose the word "octopus." First, students write "octopus" on a page, board, or transparency and circle the word. Then, students brainstorm to identify things they already know about the word. Each item is written on the page and connected to the circled word with lines, as shown in the figure below.

2. Students use their ideas to form a "meaningful sentence" using the PENS steps for structure.

An octopus has eight tentacles and lives in a cave in the ocean.

3. Another tool for students to use when writing meaningful sentences is to visualize their sentence. They should not be able to substitute another word in place of the vocabulary word. If they can, the sentence does not qualify as meaningful.

4. Students should use the "boxing and underlining" method when finished writing a sentence. They should box the vocabulary word and underline all ideas from the web. By doing this, students can check and reread their sentences.

An octopus has eight tentacles and lives in a cave in the ocean.

   A variation could be having students box and underline each other's sentences.

5. Finally, students need to pat themselves on the back with a positive affirmation. Talk about "wordsmiths" and web it together. Have students write meaningful sentences using "wordsmith."

wordsmith

Blending Fundamentals in the Sentence Writing Strategy with Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy

Describe Stage

Sharon Saunders, a SIM Trainer, special education staff development coordinator, and LD teacher in Burnside, Minnesota, has developed several materials to be used with the *Sentence Writing Strategy*.

The first item she has shared is a handout suggesting ways to combine *Fundamentals in the Sentence Writing Strategy* into the Describe Stage of *Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy*. The handout begins on this page.

The second item Sharon developed is a checklist for simple sentences that again combines elements of *Fundamentals* and *Proficiency*. The checklist appears on page 6.

CC=Cue Cards, Fund. = Fundamentals in the Sentence Writing Strategy, Prof. = Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy

❑ Fund. CC#1   5 requirements for a complete sentence (Lesson 1)

         • Learning Sheet 1A as a group
         • Learning Sheet 1B individually

❑ Prof. CC#1   Simple Sentence/Independent Clause

❑ Prof. or
 Fund. CC#2   The Subject

❑ Prof. CC#3   Verb

         • Learning Sheet 2A&B
         • Learning Sheet 3 optional
          (may want to wait until the end)

❑ Fund. CC#5   MARK—only ARK

❑ Fund. CC#6   Linking Verbs (Lesson 3)

         • Learning Sheet 4A&B
         • Learning Sheet 5 optional
          (may want to wait until the end)

         • Example Set I—Prof.

❑ Fund. CC#11 Adjectives (noun phrases) (Lesson 9)

         • Learning Sheet 20A&B

         • Example Set II—Prof.

❑ Prof. CC#5   Helping Verbs (Lesson 10—Fund.)

         • Learning Sheet 23A&B
         • Learning Sheets 24-25 optional
          (may want to wait until the end)

         • Example Set 3—Prof.

In the Classroom

❑ Fund. CC#14   Adverbs (Opt. Lesson 11)

• Learning Sheet 26A&B
• Learning Sheet 27 optional
  (may want to wait until the end)

❑ Overheads   Identifying verbs and subjects when the verb comes first

• Infinitive (Fund. Lesson 4)

• Learning Sheet 6A&B
• Learning Sheet 7 optional
  (may want to wait until the end)

❑ Fund. CC#9&10   Prepositions (Lesson 5)

• Learning Sheets 8, 10, 11A&B
• Learning Sheet 9 optional
  (may want to wait until the end)

❑ Overhead   Compound Subject

• Learning Sheet 12A&B
• Learning Sheet 13 optional
  (may want to wait until the end)

• Example Set IV

❑ Overhead   Compound Verb

• Learning Sheet 14A&B
• Learning Sheets 15-16 optional
  (may want to wait until the end)

• Example Set V

❑ Topic   Compound Subjects and Verbs (Fund. Lesson 8)

• Learning Sheet 17A&B
• Learning Sheets 18-19 optional
  (may want to wait until the end)

• Example Set VI

❑ Overhead   Formula Card

❑ Fund. CC#4   PENS

Options:

• Complete all of the Learning Sheets that were listed as optional after PENS has been introduced.

• Complete some of the Learning Sheets that were listed as optional after the model as a guided practice. This may help students reach mastery on Controlled Practice #1.

• Instead of completing the optional Learning Sheets, do Controlled Practice #1A as a guided practice and have students do Controlled Practice #1B independently.

Name: _____   Date: _____

Simple Sentence
Verbal Practice Checklist

	Attempts			
Naming Strategy Steps	1	2	3	4
Pick a formula	——	——	——	——
Explore words to fit the formula	——	——	——	——
Note the words	——	——	——	——
Search and Check	——	——	——	——
Mark out imposters *(infinitives & prepositional phrases*	——	——	——	——
Ask is there a verb	——	——	——	——
Root out the subject	——	——	——	——
Key in on the beginning, ending, middle *(capitalization, punctuation, & it makes sense)*	——	——	——	——

Giving Definitions				
Simple Sentence	——	——	——	——
Independent Clause	——	——	——	——
Subject	——	——	——	——
Verb	——	——	——	——
Compound Subject	——	——	——	——
Compound Verb	——	——	——	——
Question to ask in finding Subject(s)	——	——	——	——
Name the Linking Verbs *(am, are, is, be, been, become, was, were, seem)*	——	——	——	——

Naming Kinds of Simple Sentences				
S V	——	——	——	——
SS V	——	——	——	——
S VV	——	——	——	——
SS VV	——	——	——	——

Total _____   Percentage _____

Score Sheet

Karen Koskovich, SIM Trainer and special education consultant in Dubuque, Iowa, sent this simple sentence score sheet she developed.

"I have seen it used by so many teachers in Dubuque that I know it has helped students here," Karen reports. She said it has improved teacher feedback and student goal setting.

Simple Sentence Score Sheet

C = capital, **S** = subject, **V** = verb,
<--> = makes sense, **.!?** = ending mark,
+ = correct, **0** = incorrect or missing

_____%

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Totals
C							_____
S							_____
V							_____
<-->							_____
.!?							_____
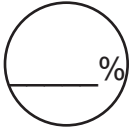
___of 30

Work on:
C
S
V
<-->
.!?

Additional strategy practice for the classroom

Lynn Barnes, an instructional collaborator (Chase Middle School) with CRL's *Pathways to Success* project in Topeka, Kansas, has developed the following ideas for the *Sentence Writing Strategy*. Classroom teachers can use these ideas for practice toward mastery.

1. Write the numbers one through ten on the board. Beside each number, write a sentence formula. Ask students to write a sentence based on the formula.
2. Give strips of paper to students, ask them to write a sentence formula on their strips, then place all strips in a basket. Select several students to draw strips from the basket and ask them to write the formulas from the strips they draw on the board. All students then write sentences based on the formulas.
3. Divide the students into small groups of no more than four members. Give each group a transparency and marker and direct them to write a sentence. Give each group time to display its sentence on the overhead and talk the other students through the steps of the strategy (PENS).
4. In a variation of the last idea, allow the authors of the sentence to select another group to talk through their sentence using PENS. If the second group is successful, it receives a point. If not, the author group gets the point.
5. Divide students into two teams. Have each team send a member to the board. Specify a sentence formula. The students not only must write the sentence correctly according to the formula given, but they also must write the formula and mark the subject and verbs correctly. Each team receives a point if the sentence is written and marked correctly.
6. Use the students' English textbooks as a basis for discussing PENS. Have one of the students select a page number, then lead the students in analyzing the sentences on that page. Students should identify the sentence formula and discuss how the PENS steps apply to the sentences they are discussing.

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