



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Effective Methods For Teaching Paragraph Development

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The Writing Dilemma

Consider the hours of English instruction devoted to subjects and predicates, fragments, run-ons, prepositional phrases, subordinate clauses, dangling participles, verbals, topic sentences, supporting details, closing sentences, and other grammatical jargon, all of which is taught with the noble intention of improving the composition skills of our students. For the most part, the result is the same: “We’ve spent three weeks on a writing unit and they still don’t know what a topic sentence is!” Similarly, consider the distraught teacher of social studies or science who, after reading a group of student essays or reports, points an accusing finger at the English teacher and asks: “What are you teaching in your class?” But most importantly, consider the anguished and frustrated student who, when seeing each of his written assignments splattered with red ink, reaches the tragic misconception that “I can’t write, so why bother?” This is the most tragic result of our ineffective methods of “teaching” writing. “Most kids can’t write” is our attitude; “I can’t write,” respond our students.

For any success to be realized, students, as well as teachers, must recognize writing skills as skills which transcend the boundaries of subject matter. All teachers should know and cultivate writing skills. Writing should be an inter-disciplinary skill; it should be as much a part of the social studies or science curricula as of English. Teachers of content as well must make conscious and sincere efforts to improve our students’ writing skills. Lip service is not enough. The “I will show these reports to your English teacher; use a dictionary” tactic won’t work. Students should learn, through imitation and discovery, modes of discourse suitable to an assignment. Teachers should expose students to basic “grammatical and rhetorical patterns,” stressing structure initially and content and style later. An analogy can be made between the athlete and the writer. The athlete first imitates other athletes. He plays the game, learns new rules, and develops his own style. The writer does the same. He imitates models, learns new rules and develops his own style as his proficiency increases. In both cases, style is developed only when the basics have been mastered. Students learn to write by imitation and doing. “Learning to write—regardless of the role we teachers think we play in it—is the mastery of several patterns of discourse.”² The inexperienced writer confuses good writing with a decorative, flowery, and ornamental style which disregards structure. “This is as much a misconception as thinking one hangs a picture on the wall before he builds a house.”³ Patience and perseverance are the keys to successful writing for both teacher and student, for what is style but the “cumulative effect of choices made within or between established structures.”⁴ As Hemingway states, “Prose is architecture, not interior decoration.”

Establishing Goals

Concrete goals and behavioral objectives are the cornerstones of an effective writing program, as they will provide the teacher with valid evaluative and diagnostic tools and permit the student to achieve success. Prior writing experiences for many of our students have resulted in failure primarily due to poor objectives, which failed to allow the students to succeed.

We must first tap the abundant resources our students have brought with them to class. All of our students have mastered the syntactical complexities of their mother tongue. When the child first learned to speak, he did so through imitation. He learned words, imitated sentence patterns, and later created original sentences according to the many patterns he had internalized. ⁶In essence, he has learned the patterns of verbal communication. Unfortunately, when “teaching” writing, teachers fail to recognize this innate phenomenon. We are so concerned with grammatical rhetoric, standard English and proper usage, that the student is no longer confident about his ability to use language. Such a student will never be motivated to write. Management of a writing program is also crucial. Although the following suggestions are not original, they are invaluable tools to diagnose deficiencies, prescribe methods for improvement, and to provide both teacher and students visible signs of progress in a previously nebulous area of study.

Setting Up Your Program

- * In September, give each student in your class a file folder which will contain all of his writing. Since loose leaf is in abundance at this time, I have each student put a dozen or so sheets in the folder for future use. Later in the term, when paper gets scarce, the “I don’t have paper” disruption (or diversion) won’t create a problem.
- * Have the students put their names and any other information you might want on the folders. My students enjoy adding personal touches, such as astrology signs, pictures, designs, etc. This, I believe, instills pride in the folder itself, and later in its contents.
- * Keep the folders in a convenient but secure place. As your program begins, previous writing samples can be used as models for imitation. The best resource for teaching students to write is their own work.
- * Create a “Writers’ Corner” or eye-catching display to “show off” commendable efforts. For some students, this is the only motivation they need.
- * Establish realistic guidelines which will govern your class’s writing efforts. Your class might complain, but do not submit to their cries of tyranny. Show them you are serious about their writing. Soon, they will take it seriously too.
- * All compositions are written in ink. (I demand blue or black ink only.)
- * All compositions are written in the student’s best hand. Cursive or printing is acceptable.
- * Neatness is a must. No cross-outs; no tattered papers. The student should make the reader want to read his paper. No one wants to eat an unappetizing-looking meal.
- * Proper form is always used.
- * “English” is always capitalized as well as the pronoun “I.”
- * All writing must be within the margins. Every paragraph is indented, about one half inch.
- * Misspelled words are not acceptable.
- * Be sure to enforce these rules. Don’t make exceptions. In a short period of time, papers will be neat, many common misspellings will disappear (to, too, two etc.), and your students will develop a positive attitude toward their ability to write.

Pre-Writing Exercises A Vital Component

Prewriting exercises are vital components to the success of your writing program. Generally speaking, by the time your students have reached you, they are frustrated with writing. Many, on the other hand, have only been required to write busy work assignments, time fillers, or the most damaging of all, the punishing essay. The initial exercise suggested here provides the student a chance to begin writing. This initial exercise is saved and used as a device to diagnose class and individual deficiencies.

During the first week of school, ask your students to write a short paragraph about themselves entitled “A Very Special Person: Me.” Have the paragraph include personal data such as name, address, age, and place of birth. (Be careful what you ask for—some students may feel their privacy is being violated by a total stranger.) They can include hobbies, likes, pet peeves, and future plans. Assure your students that they can’t fail this assignment. Everyone who completes it will receive a passing grade. Read the papers, record a personal comment like “you sound like an interesting person, I’m anxious to know you better,” and tell your class to file them in their folders.

In these first writing samples several problems will undoubtedly appear. For the most part, indentations and margins will be non-existent. In addition to these superficial problems which reflect the student’s slipshod attitude toward writing, grammatical errors and misspellings will appear. The paragraph, as a whole, will ramble on incoherently; structure and unity will be virtually non-existent. My “pet peeve” is the paragraph that doesn’t end but stops as if the student put it down and forgot to finish it. Equally disturbing, although commendable for effort, is the structurally weak “that’s what I think” (or variant of this construction) conclusion.

Don’t be discouraged. Your students do have a great deal to say. They only lack a means in which to say it effectively. Your task is to provide them with this means of effective communication. Help them to mold this apparently random collage of scattered information into a solid and cohesive unit. Teach them to select structures which will best express their important feelings and profound observations to someone else. Let them write.

Providing Structure

Shortly after assigning the first exercise, the second assignment, dealing with the same topic, should be assigned. As mentioned earlier, students should be exposed to basic grammatical and rhetorical patterns. Very specific objectives should be established. Give your students a sense of direction; what do you want them to do?

Distribute to the class copies of “framed paragraph” entitled “A Very Special Person . . . Me.” (See Activity Sheets.) The subject matter for the “composition” evolves from the student’s most vital resource, himself. Prepare an overhead transparency of the ditto so you can guide your students to each “slot.” Students simply fill in each “slot” with a grammatically acceptable bit of information. Your students should be comfortable with the activity as the responses required were included in the previous assignment. Upon completion of the “framed paragraph” students transfer the “composition” to their own papers. At this point, stress the guidelines outlined earlier. Use models of paragraphs from texts, magazines, newspapers, or any other resource to give the students a prototype to imitate. Show them what a paragraph “looks like.” As your class transfers the information, check each individual’s progress. Be sure your students have comprehended each step.

The next phase of the process requires the student to read his "composition" aloud. This will give the student a feel for the composition as a unified body. As the vocabulary provided is simple, and the open-ended sentences have been completed by the student with his own vocabulary, even the poorest readers should have no problems. To eliminate reticence, do the exercise yourself. Reading yours first provides a model: stress transitions, emphatic statements, end punctuation, and the intonations of various sentence structures. Your audience will be captivated; most kids want to know more about their teachers.

The implications of the activity are great. You have given the students an opportunity to succeed. They have imitated an acceptable and effective mode of discourse. They have imitated and duplicated sentence structures with which they may not be familiar. And for the first time, for many, they have created a unified and cohesive unit of written communication.

When called upon to read these "compositions" the students have heard the sounds and rhythmic patterns of the written word, a "dialect" much different than that of the verbal "dialect." As Robert Frost maintained, a writer writes with his ear, resulting in the "sound of sense." ⁷ Give your students the opportunity to hear the sense they have made.

Pre-planning and Structure: The Key to Effective Writing

"The art of writing is no more spontaneous than the art of marriage . . . the writer must plan and calculate, scheme, and decide. . . ." ⁸ The student writer has no conception of the above process. He jumps into his writing, as evidenced in the first writing sample, blindly and naively, never seeing beyond the sentence he is writing. The result, inevitably, is writing which lacks unity, coherence, and punch. An experienced writer "knows where he is going and how he wants to get there"; the inexperienced writer does not. ⁹

Pre-planning and structure is the emphasis of this program. Students, through the continual use of "plan sheets," are forced to plan before they write. Resistance and confusion may be apparent at first, but the margin for failure is slight. By avoiding grammatical jargon and textbook lessons dealing with composition, the student will write paragraphs, and later longer compositions, utilizing what he already knows about the syntax of his language. It is essential that all assignments deal with single paragraph development. As William Levy contends:

The single paragraph includes all the important elements of the complex act of written composition. The challenges to the student in the writing of a single paragraph, as we know all too surely, are sufficiently great to represent an educational goal of very substantial scope and depth. Nevertheless, because it is a relatively limited and specific goal, it represents a practical and realistic educational aspiration . . . ¹⁰

Steps toward the achievement of these goals must be carefully and methodically nurtured. For purposes of organization, the "plan sheets" students will use have been classified into the four basic types of prose: argumentation, exposition, description, and narration. It is the ultimate goal of the program to prepare the student to write longer compositions containing elements of each type.

Argumentation and exposition traditionally are the most frequent types of writing students are requested to do. The essay, reports, how to assignments, and longer exam questions all fall under these types. Argumentation will be the first type to be studied as it lends itself to topics which evolve from the student's storehouse of opinions, attitudes, and ideologies. This area of study is called "Expressing An Opinion." Students will be provided with "plan sheets" stressing a structure which provides the student with an effective means of expressing his opinions.

The steps for completion of each “plan sheet” are relatively simple. (See Introductory Lessons.) Each student follows the plan methodically and systematically as he plans his paragraph. A “brain storming” technique permits the student to think, to discover inconsistencies in his argument, and to edit. He experiments with the arrangement of his arguments, their effectiveness, and substance. He is shown that the most effective method of argumentation is arranging ideas in ascending order from least to most important. Transitions, conducive to the unity and strength of his argument, are provided.

The “plan sheets” also force students to scrutinize spelling problems. Even the poorest spellers know when they’re guessing. Space is provided on the plan sheet to correct spelling before it appears in the first draft. In the event a student does misspell a word, inform him of it by merely indicating to him that such a problem exists. Do not tell which words, only the number of errors. Force the student to use the dictionary. In my classes, I explain to the students that the authors of the dictionary know much more than I do about words. “Why rely on an amateur when you can consult an expert.” This usually is sufficient to justify my method.

As proficiency increases, allow your student to experiment with better and more effective vocabulary. Direct him to the *Thesaurus*. Allow him to expand his vocabulary. As his proficiency and mastery of the basic pattern for argumentation increase, introduce new transitions until he has a wide selection from which to choose. Soon he will come to realize that some work better than others, and that in some instances, the arguments flow naturally without transitions. However, in the early stage, require your students to use the transitions, even if only on the plan sheet, to insure logical and unified structure. Although the paragraph may sound artificial and stilted the transitions will embellish the overall unity. Insist that your students continue to use the plan sheet even if they feel they have mastered the structure. Instill in them the importance of planning, no matter how proficient they become.

Revision is another emphasis in the program. Students should continuously revise each paragraph. Before the revision, a new skill can be introduced, or focus put on an individual problem appearing in the initial draft. When the student revises, he can remedy his individual problems. Concentrate on the most serious problems; remember that your student’s confidence in his writing abilities is still fragile.

Grading student writing has always presented a problem. With reluctant writers, the problem is intensified. This program is success oriented. Grades are not assigned until all of the objectives have been met. Some students move on more quickly, while others continue to work on the same assignment. Allow each student to work at his own level of proficiency.

See to it that each student achieves the individual goals you have established for him.

With systematic planning and practice, the proficiency and confidence of your students will grow. You will notice marked improvement in content, more creativity, and longer pieces of writing. Continue to build upon and embellish the skills which your students have mastered.

When students have indicated mastery of the argumentation level, move to Level Two: “Writing Expository Paragraphs.” The format of the plan sheet is the same, but with more emphasis on the student’s originality.

Now they are to develop their own topic sentences without the aid of the open-ended sentence used in Level One. Facts and pertinent information are now used to support a thesis. Information can be brought in from outside sources. If opinions are given, they are supported with facts. Structure is still stressed, new transitions are introduced, and the methodical planning stage is still utilized.

Depending on the nature of the class or individual student, some Levels may be repeated as often as necessary. Be sure to assign meaningful topics which will adapt easily to your objectives. Continue the sequence throughout: planning, transferral, oral reading, expansion, skill lesson, revision, oral reading, and final draft.*

The final two levels of the program concentrate on description and narration. At this Level, your students should be performing with marked confidence, proficiency, and growth. Continuity is the key; the program will not work on a "hit or miss" basis. Practice is the key. At this Level, the plan sheets allow the student more freedom without disregard for structure. Creativity and style are stressed with the aid of planning. Within any level of the program, show your students methods to vary the basic structures. Topic sentences may be found at the beginning, middle, or end, or as an implied generalization. Expose them to the *Thesaurus* to make more vivid word choices. Teach them to use similes, metaphors, and figurative language. Let them experiment, let them scheme, let them create. But most of all, let them write!

*See Activity Sequence

Notes

1. Robert Potter, *Writing Sense Teaching Guide* (New York: Globe Book Company, 1976), Page 2.
2. Potter, Page 2.
3. Donald M. Murray, *A Writer Teaches Writing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), Page 6.
4. Potter, Page 2.
5. Murray, Page 6.
6. Carol Kuykendall, "Grammar and Compositions: Myths and Realities," *The English Journal* (December 1975), Pages 6-7.
7. Potter, Page 2.
8. Murray, Page 6.
9. Murray, Page 6.
10. Wilbert J. Levy, *Paragraph Power* (New York: Amsco School Publications, 1977), Page iii.

Activity Sequence

I. Pre-Program Exercise

- A. Diagnosis Writing Sample
- B. Framed Paragraph
- C. Paragraph Models What do paragraphs look like?
- D. Transferral
- E. Oral Reading

Skill Lesson : What do sentences sound like?

Skill Lesson : “The Importance of a Plan”

Beginning, Middle, End

II. Expressing an Opinion *

It is proposed that a discussion of each “type” of prose precede writing. Again, provide models from various sources when possible.

The number of revisions may vary. The minimum number for each assignment is *three* . Save each draft from each assignment to measure progress.

- A. Making the Plan
 - 1. Topic Development
 - 2. Brainstorming Reasons Why
 - 3. Arrangement of Ideas
 - 4. Spelling Check & Sentence Check
- B. Transferral* (Draft 1)
- C. Oral Reading
- D. Evaluation
- E. Expansion
- F. Spelling and Sentence Check
- G. Transferral (Draft 2)
- H. Oral Reading

Skill Lesson (May be Individualized or for entire class)

- I. Revision* (Draft 3)
- J. Oral Reading
- K. Final Evaluation

III. Writing Expository Paragraphs *

- A. Making the Plan
 - 1. Topic Development*
 - 2. Brainstorming Getting the Facts
 - 3. Arrangement of Ideas
 - 4. Spelling and Sentence Check
- B. Transferral (Draft 1)
- C. Oral Reading
- D. Evaluation
- E. Expansion
- F. Spelling and Sentence Check
- G. Transferral (Draft 2)
- H. Oral Reading

Skill Lesson

- I. Revision (Draft 3)
- J. Oral Reading
- K. Final Evaluation

*A sub-topic called "Writing A How-To Paragraph" will also be included.

*A lesson in the use of resource materials would be advantageous at this point.

IV. Writing a Descriptive Paragraph

- A. Making the Plan
 - 1. Topic Development
 - 2. Brainstorming Appealing to the Senses
 - 3. Arrangement of Ideas
 - 4. Spelling and Sentence Check
- B. Transferral (Draft 1)
- C. Oral Reading
- D. Evaluation
- E. Expansion
- F. Spelling and Sentence Check
- G. Transferral (Draft 2)
- H. Oral Reading

Skill Lesson

- I. Revision (Draft 3)
- J. Oral Reading
- K. Final Evaluation

V. Writing Narratives

- A. Making the Plan
 - 1. Story Development
 - 2. Brainstorming Elements of the Narrative
 - 3. Arrangement of Ideas
 - 4. Spelling and Sentence Check
- B. Transferral (Draft 1)
- C. Oral Reading
- D. Evaluation
- E. Expansion
- F. Spelling and Sentence Check
- G. Transferral (Draft 2)
- H. Oral Reading

Skill Lesson

- I. Revision (Draft 3)
- J. Oral Reading
- K. Final Evaluation

Expressing An Opinion—Introductory Lessons

Upon completion of Level II, which serves as both a diagnostic and motivational device, Skill Lesson 1 can be taught.

SKILL LESSON 1 —What are sentences? What do they sound like?

Teacher to Students : When we speak to each other, we have at our disposal several ways to help us

communicate. We can use body movement, hand gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and other ways to help us get our messages across. When we're face to face it's easy to communicate because if the listener doesn't understand something, all he has to do is ask for an explanation.

But what would happen in this situation?

Your best friend calls you on the phone and exclaims: "Guess what happened to me on the way home from school?" Just as you were ready to ask, your phone went dead. What would you naturally want to know? You would be most curious and anxious to find out what had happened. You would have to figure out a way to find the answer—guess, go to his house, or wait until you saw him again. Until you see your friend, no communication has taken place.

When we write, we're in a similar situation. If we don't write clearly, the "listener" would feel just like you—"what happened?" If it's really something interesting or exciting, he doesn't want to wait to find out; he wants to know right away.

One way to make sure this doesn't happen is to write complete sentences. All of us have learned the definition of what a sentence is, but what do sentences sound like?

(Provide the class with some examples:)

Although it was raining

My best friend Joey

A beautiful new car

Because I was tired

Ask: Are these word groups sentences? Why not?

They aren't sentences because they aren't complete thoughts. We naturally sense something is missing.*

What happened although it was raining?

What about my best friend Joey?

What about the new car?

What happened because you were tired?

Place several groups of words on the board for student examination. Be sure to place both incomplete thoughts as well as complete sentences on board.

Ask individuals to read word groups out loud to determine *sentence* or fragment.

Incomplete thoughts should be completed. Ask for several responses for each to illustrate the different ways each group can be completed.

Activity : Dictate several groups of words to students. Students are to complete incomplete thoughts and label sentences. Include several sentence types as well as fragments (clause, phrases, etc.). Complete sentences should be punctuated.

Reinforcement: Any textbook exercise dealing with sentence fragments can be assigned for homework or for reinforcement. Student samples from previous writing exercises usually work best.

SKILL LESSON 2 —Why do Writers Plan?

Using posters or the following statements, ask students to consider these situations:

A baker wants to bake a fancy cake.

A builder wants to build a house.

A driver wants to drive from New Haven to Los Angeles.

Teacher to Students : Assume that all of these people have everything they need to complete the task (materials, equipment, manpower, etc.). However, one important thing is needed by all. What do you think it is?

*Teacher Note: Depending on the class, grammatical theory about subjects and predicates can be discussed here. However, the emphasis here is on the sound of sentences, not the theory behind them.

The baker needs a recipe.

The builder needs a blueprint.

The driver needs a map.

Teacher to Students : Regardless of their expertise and experience, all of these people need a plan to assist them. They can't randomly go about their jobs without planning and thinking ahead. All need to know what they have to do and how they will do it before they start.

When we write, we must do the same. First, what do I have to do? Secondly, how will I go about it? We can't sit down, write something and then see how it turned out. We need to have an idea beforehand as to what the writing will sound and look like when finished.

The experienced writer has lots of tools at his disposal. He uses colorful words, different kinds of sentences, and gives reasons, facts, or examples. He writes clearly and to the point. But regardless of his experience or expertise, he plans, thinks, and experiments. He doesn't jump in and write, hoping for the best.

When he's done, he writes again, or "revises" which means "to improve." He adds more sentences, substitutes better words, or leaves words out. He molds and shapes, always keeping his purpose in mind.

Activity —The writer of this paragraph didn't plan ahead. His sentences are not arranged in an easy-to-follow order. See if you can help him to reorganize his paragraph. (See Paragraph Model 1, Activity Sheets.)

SKILL LESSON 3 —The Structure of a Paragraph

Ask students to take out their composition, “A Very Special Person . . . Me.” [Use the framed paragraph model.]

Teacher to Students : Your paragraph has been arranged in a special way. Most paragraphs are arranged the same way.

A statement is made (I’m special.)

The statement is explained (Why?)

The thought is concluded (What are you like?)

All paragraphs, regardless of their purpose, are constructed this way. In simple terms we:

Say what we’re going to say (Topic Sentence)

We say it (Supporting Details)

We say what we’ve said (Concluding Sentence)

All paragraphs have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Activity —Distribute “Expressing an Opinion Model 2.” The paragraph, written by a student, is simple but structurally sound. The beginning, middle, end construction is clearly evident.

Students are to read the paragraph and answer the corresponding questions. Go over and discuss the questions with your class.

Reinforcement : More samples can be examined and discussed. Textbook examples can be used, but student paragraphs usually are the best resource.

SKILL LESSON 4 —What are Transitional Words?

Distribute Paragraph Model 3. Students are to read it silently as you read it to them. Read deliberately, stressing transitions. Reinforce previous concept of beginning, middle, and end. Ask your students to consider the following:

What “signals” were given which let you know when a new reason was given?

In what order did they seem to appear?

How did you know the writer’s strongest reason was given?

Explain to class that the signals given are called “transitions.” The word transition itself means to “change over.” A writer uses transitions to help the reader follow his thoughts. Those you see here are only some. The written language is filled with transitional words. (See Advanced Plan Sheet Section.)

Now, read the same paragraph, omitting the transitions. Does it sound better? Is the writer still communicating?

Sometimes, if we have written very clearly, transitions can be left out. However it's a good idea to start with them first and leave them out later.

Reinforcement Use any model which contains transitional words and ask your class to pick them out. Re-read omitting transitions to determine their necessity.

SKILL LESSON 5

At this point, the class has been exposed to several very simple paragraphs. With the first assignment the class will construct a paragraph very similar to the models examined. *Each step outlined here is used for all following compositions at all levels .*

A very simple topic to begin with is:

“My favorite season of the year”

(Depending on the level or nature of class, the topic can vary. This topic has worked well with my students.)

Sample Lesson Plan

Initial Lesson “Expressing An Opinion”

Behavioral Objectives *

1. Students will develop a topic sentence.
2. Students will provide and use relevant ideas to support the topic sentence.
3. Students will use transitional words.
4. Ideas will be in proper sequence.
5. Students will bring paragraph to a logical closing.
6. Complete sentences will be used.
7. Paragraph will contain no misspellings.
8. Paragraph will contain no run-on sentences.
9. Paragraph will be indented.
10. Proper form will be used.

* Objectives change with each subsequent activity. However, these initial objectives will be the foundation for future assignments.

Sample Sequence of Lesson: Expressing An Opinion: Plan Sheet #1

1. Distribute Plan Sheet #1.
2. On overhead transparency, or board, write the following questions: What is your favorite season of the year? (Be sure to do the exercise yourself; let your students see you writing too!)
3. Instruct students to copy the question down next to the line labeled "Topic" on Plan Sheet.
4. On the same line, or just below, ask students to write down their answer to this question. A single word response is acceptable.
5. Direct students to Roman Numeral I. "Opening Statement." They may use A or B, *not both* . (Students may develop their own opening statements; Letter C has been provided for this.)
6. Ask students to put their original answers in a complete sentence. Example: Summer is my favorite season of the year. Write this answer on line A, B, or C:
Example; A. There are several reasons why *summer is my favorite season* .
B. *Summer is my favorite season of the year* .
This is true for several reasons.
C. Summer is the greatest season of them all.
7. Move now to Step II. "Reasons Why."
8. On the lines provided, students are to "brainstorm," that is, jot down as many reasons as possible for choosing the seasons they did. Complete sentences, and correct spelling are not necessary at this point. Tell your students to fill as many lines as possible under II. If you'd like, make a game out of it. Who can get the most in three (3) minutes?
9. After completion of this activity, ask your students to consider the reasons they have chosen. Students now assign a number from 1-5 to their five strongest reasons, one being the weakest, five being the strongest. When this is complete, those remaining are no longer necessary.

NOTE: It might be necessary to check your students' reasons. Some may be only examples of the general reason. For example, students may have chosen *sports* as one reason, and then picked baseball as another.

10. Now your students are ready for step three:

Sentences and Transitions.

11. On your transparency, write the first group of transitions* your students will use:

For one reason,

For another,

In addition,

Furthermore,

But most of all,

Instruct the student to copy these transitions on the left hand margin, one to a Line, exactly as you have written them (capitals and punctuation included.) Again, a transparency will eliminate the mass confusion.

12. Now, next to each transition, direct your students to jot down the reasons chosen in Step II *starting with number 1 this time through number 5* .

Complete sentences now must be used. Provide models if necessary. Remind your students that short, simple sentences are acceptable. Remind them to punctuate each sentence.

13. To round out the paragraph, and to eliminate the weak “that’s how I feel” conclusions, direct your students to simply copy their original sentence from Step I to Step IV. Although redundant, and perhaps not even necessary, it will develop the sense of finality and conclusion all paragraphs must contain.

Example ;

I. There are several reasons why *I like the summer* .

IV. I like the summer.

14. At this point, students are still confused as to what they have done. As a model, read your “paragraph” to them. Use Steps I, III, and V. Step II, remember, was only for idea arrangement.

As you read, stress emphatic sentences, transitions, end punctuation, and the conclusion.

Call upon individuals to read out loud; most will be anxious.

Students will be delighted that their “Paragraph” sounds very much like yours.

* *TEACHER NOTE* : New transitions will be introduced as students master the original set.

As one student in my remedial class exclaimed, “Did I write this?!”

15. Spelling checks should take place before transferral. Check students’ papers for misspellings. Do not point them out, only the number of errors. Most students know the words which “don’t look right” or which they have guessed at. Have them jot down questionable words under Step V and consult the dictionary. When found, the correct spelling should be recorded next to the misspelled word. Some might be delighted to see they were right after all! Above all, don’t give in to the “how can I find it if I can’t spell it” copout. Assure the students they will find the word if they look hard enough. You’ll find, in a few short weeks, students automatically going to the dictionary.

16. Before students are ready to transfer the information to paper, remind them of “what paragraphs look like.” Stress your rules: indentations, proper form, margins, neatness, etc. Provide models to imitate.

17. Upon completion of the first draft, papers should be collected and evaluated. At this point, or the next day, your skill lesson can be introduced for the first revision.

18. Under Step VI, students can also consult a thesaurus for more explicit word choices. They simply record the vague word and next to it the explicit synonym.

This can later be used as a vocabulary lesson.

With each plan sheet on file, students are also building their vocabularies.

I have saved Step VI for later assignments when students become confident about their writing.

* This methodical approach becomes simpler with subsequent lessons, as students master the system. However, when they are working on their own, be sure they do not skip any steps.

SKILL 6 –Sentence Expansion

When students have completed draft 1, they are ready to expand to make the composition more interesting.

Distribute Model 4. Discuss the Model with Class. The model is self-explanatory.

Activity —Have students experiment with and expand example. Put several on the board.

Reinforcement —Students Complete Fun Sheet 1.

SKILL 7 —Sentence Expansion

Distribute standardized Sentence Expansion Sheet. Next to the indicated numbers, each reason (sentence) is written down. Each is expanded by adding words and phrases to answer the questions given. (If space is not enough, students can work on regular paper. However, expansion takes place *before Draft 2* , *not during* .)

Upon completion, Draft 2 is written. Stress again beginning, middle, and end.

Each expanded sentence can become a new paragraph.

Check spelling and sentences.

With the *initial* exercises, emphasis is placed on use of plan sheets, expansion sheets, and transferral. Be sure these objectives have been met.

With subsequent compositions, a new skill lesson is introduced. Following the lesson, a final revision is made. The number of revisions students will have to make may vary. Only assign grades when you feel the composition is at its best. For the reluctant writer, a poor grade could shatter any confidence he may have mustered.

The skill lesson for the first revision consists in teaching students how to omit unnecessary transitions, and eliminate the “there are several reasons why” lead, and the redundant closing sentence. (See Student Sample.)

Assign Composition 2 at this point to reinforce the sequence. Introduce a new skill—movability of clauses and prepositional phrases. Provide models.

Repeat by assigning new topics. With each topic, a new skill is introduced.

From experience, I have found it takes about three assignments for students to understand the use of the plan sheets and expansion sheets. Be sure to save all plan sheets, drafts, and expansions. These will be useful models for assignment two.

When introducing new topics and skills, provide models which can be directly incorporated into the assignment. I have found that isolated grammar lessons are fruitless as there is little, if any, carry over into students’ writing. Use your textbook as a supplementary text to your program, not vice versa. Teach grammatical concepts from your students’ writing. For example, if the skill is Complex Sentences, provide models and ask students to pick some out from their papers. They do write them. Then, use text models and definitions. Not only will they understand the concept, they will remember it. For obvious reasons, it is impossible to list all of the skills to be covered. However, I have included a list of both class and individual skills which I have stressed.

SUGGESTED SEQUENCE OF SKILLS (CLASS)

I. Preprogram

1. What do paragraphs look like?
 - a. Indenting
 - b. Margins

II. Expressing an Opinion *

1. Composition 1

- A. Recognizing Sentences (Include Types & Structures)
- B. Recognizing Paragraph Structure
 - a. Topic Sentences (Beginning)
 - b. Supporting Elements (Middle)
 - c. Concluding Sentence (End)
- C. Recognition and Use of Transitional Words

(New transitions are introduced with new compositions until students have a wide selection from which to choose.)

- D. Expanding Sentences
 - a. Adding Adverbials
 - b. Adding Adjectives
 - c. Giving Examples

* *TEACHER NOTE* : For each type of prose, provide several models.

1. Composition 2

- A. More Transitions
(First of all, then, too, also, furthermore, finally)
- B. Sentence Expansion
- C. Movability of Modifiers

2. Composition 3

- A. More Transitions
- B. Movability of Modifiers
- C. Combining Sentences
 - a. Appositives
 - b. Participles
 - c. Parenthetical Elements

3. Composition 4

- A. Writing an Opposing View
- B. Structure
- C. More Transitions

4. Composition 5

- A. Comparing Differences
- B. Structure
- C. More Transitions

III. Writing Expository Paragraphs*

1. Composition 1

- A. Getting the Facts

- B. Choosing Pertinent Information
- C. Paraphrasing
- D. Writing Reports

2. *Composition 2*

Repeat above steps

3. *Composition 3 How to Paragraphs*

- A. Arrangement of Ideas Steps
- B. Transitions
- C. Did I communicate?

Continue to stress skills outlined in Level II.

IV. *Descriptive Writing*

1. *Composition 1*

- A. Appealing to the Sentences
- B. Arrangement of Ideas
- C. More Transitions

2. *Composition 2*

- A. Colorful Language
- B. Figurative Language
 - a. Metaphors
 - b. Similes
 - c. Figures of Speech

*Repeat as necessary.

V. *Narrative Writing*

1. *Composition 1*

- A. Elements of the Narrative
- B. Using Dialogue
 - a. Punctuation
- C. Beginning, Middle, End

VI. Advanced Exercises

*Individual Skills **

I. Punctuation Problems

II. Subject and Verb Agreement

III. Incorrect Use of Verbals Resulting in Sentence Fragments

IV. Pronoun Usage

- a. Agreement with Antecedent
- b. Shift in Person
- c. Correct use of Case

V. Use of Nouns

- a. Plurals
- b. Possessives
- c. Capitalization

VI. Use of Verbs

- a. Irregular
- b. Shift in Tense
- c. Voice

VII. Vocabulary

- a. Correct Spelling of basic Dolch Sight List
 - b. Spelling Demons (to, too, two, etc.)
- VIII. Special Demons
- a. "could of"
 - b. over to Bill's house
 - c. "that's what I think" conclusions
 - d. "Mary, she went to the dance"

* *TEACHER NOTE* : These are problems I most often see. For the most part, they can be dealt with on an individual basis.

Expressing An Opinion

The following guide sheets and activities are used with “Expressing An Opinion.”

The models used for the activities are original compositions written by my remedial students.

TEACHER NOTE : These samples were later revised and refined.

A Very Special Person . . . Me

Hi! My name is ____ . I am a very special person. I am ____ years old and a student at ____ . I was born in the month of ____ under the sign of ____ which means I am a ____ person.

My hobbies or special interests include ____ , ____ , ____ , and ____ . I especially enjoy ____ because ____ .

This year I hope to ____ because ____ What kind of person are you?

Expressing an Opinion

Model 1

The writer of this paragraph did not plan ahead. Although he has given some good reasons to support his opinion, the reasons have not been arranged in an easy-to-follow order. Some of the reasons as well, drift from the main idea. See if you can help the writer revise this paragraph.

An after school job would be a valuable and worthwhile experience. Furthermore, I could earn money to buy things like clothes, school supplies, and albums. For one reason, it would be a good way to learn the value of money. But most of all, having a job would make me feel grown up because I wouldn't have to rely on my parents so much. In addition, my parents always yell at me. For another reason, the responsibilities that go along with a job might help me in school. School is very important.

Revise the above paragraph in the space provided:

Expressing an Opinion

Model 2

Read the following paragraph. See if you can discover the “pattern” the writer has used to explain his opinion.

There are several reasons why summer is my favorite season of the year. For one reason, I like to relax in the shade and sleep while I dream about the trees. For another reason, during the day, I could have a picnic and invite a friend. We would cook hotdogs, drink soda, and play all day. But first, I would have to find a comfortable spot. In addition, we could go to the beach to build sand castles and swim in the cool ocean.

Furthermore, at night during the summer my friend and I would go camping where we could build a fire and toast marshmallows. We could tell ghost stories, listen to the crickets and frogs, and then go to sleep.

But most of all, I like summer because there is no school and I have the time to do all of my favorite things. Sometimes, I wish summer would last forever.

1. What sentence tells us what this paragraph is about?

2. List the sentences which explain or give reasons why this student likes summer.

3. Which sentence sums up the idea of the entire paragraph?

Expressing an Opinion

Model 3

Read the following paragraph silently as I read it to you. Pay special attention to the underlined words and the order in which they appear.

Pollution is the biggest problem in the world today. *For one reason* , the chemicals that we spray into the air will destroy the atmosphere and the sun’s rays will burn us. *For another reason* , if we continue to throw trash and garbage into the sea, the fish will die and millions of people will die because they depend on fish for food. *In addition* , our lungs will become diseased because of the polluted air. Many people will get cancer and other terrible diseases. *But most of all* , the plants will die and then we might die too because the plants give us oxygen to breathe. Not only that, no one will ever be able to replace the trees and flowers. In my opinion,

pollution should be the first problem the president tries to solve.

What signals were given to help you know a new reason was given?

In what order did they seem to appear?

What was the strongest or most important argument? How did you know?

Plan Sheet #1

Expressing an Opinion

Topic.: _____

I. Opening Statement (Choose one or develop your own)

A. There are several reasons why _____

B. _____ This is true for several reasons.

C. _____.

II. Reasons Why:

III. Transitional Words and Sentences:

IV. Clincher or Closing Sentence:

V. Spelling (Use Dictionary)

VI. Vocabulary (Use Thesaurus)

____ _
____ _

Expressing an Opinion

Model 4: Expansion

Read the short paragraph below:

There are several reasons why summer is my favorite season of the year. For one reason, I like to go bike riding. For another, I like to play football. Furthermore, I enjoy going to cookouts. In addition, I like to travel. But most of all, I like to go swimming. Summer is my best season of the year.

Although the above paragraph is clearly written and organized, it would have been much more interesting if the writer had provided more details and information. Read the *expanded* version of the same paragraph below:

My favorite season of the year is summer. For one reason, I enjoy riding my bike *through the park on warm summer mornings with my best friend* . *Sometimes we ride slowly looking at all the pretty flowers or trees* . *When it is very hot, we ride as fast as we can so the cool breeze will cool us off* . *Not only is bike riding a fun thing to do in the summer, but it is also a great way to stay in shape* .

In the summer time, I enjoy playing football *at the park too. My friends and I play every night after dinner when the sun isn't so hot . These football games are a lot of fun because everyone in the neighborhood plays and we always have a big game .*

I also enjoy cookouts *in the summer at my grandmother's house . Juicy hot dogs and hamburgers, corn on the cob, and refreshing watermelon make the cookouts special . Best of all, I get a chance to see all my relatives . When the sun goes down and everyone is full, we just sit around and talk and laugh almost all night long .*

Furthermore, summer is vacation time. *Every summer my family and I go on long trips . Last summer we went to Disney World for two weeks . I think this was the greatest summer of them all . I'll never forget the exciting rides, the beautiful sights, and the funny Disney characters.*

But most of all, summer is my favorite season *because I can enjoy my favorite sport, swimming, whenever I like . There's nothing like splashing in the Hillhouse pool or a cool lake on a hot July afternoon . I guess if I had my choice, summer would stay all year long .*

The writer of this composition simply added words and phrases to his short sentences which answer some basic questions about the original short sentences. For example, look at the original first sentence:

For one reason, I like to go bike riding.

Where does he go bike riding?

When?

With whom?

What do they do?

Why?

In the above sentence, we don't know. Look at the expanded sentence now. Can you answer the above questions?

I enjoy riding my bike through the park on warm summer mornings with my best friend. Sometimes we ride slowly looking at the pretty flowers and trees. When it is hot, we ride as fast as we can so the cool breeze will cool us off. Not only is bike riding a fun thing to do in summer, but it is a great way to stay in shape.

Short sentences can be expanded or made into several sentences by adding words or phrases which answer the following questions:

Where? When? How? Why? With Whom? How Much?

How Many? What or Who? What do they do?

NOW YOU TRY IT

See if you can expand this short sentence into a more interesting one the same way:

The dog barks.

Fun Sheet 1

Sentence Expansion

Directions: Expand these short sentences into longer ones or several by providing answers to the questions when? with whom? how? why? how much? what or whom? and what they do.

Every question doesn't have to be answered and you may work in any order when providing answers to the questions. Use your imagination. Make them interesting and fun to read.

1. Dragons are scary.

2. Parents are no fun.

3. Teachers get me mad.

4. Birthdays are special.

Expressing an Opinion

Expansion Sheet

Opening Statement: _____

Keeping your topic in mind, expand each of the reasons in your paragraph by answering the questions, where, when, how, why, with whom, how much, how often, how many, what kind, which one, what you, it, or they do. Each of your expanded sentences can become new paragraphs. Work in any order. Use as many as you can.

Sentence 1. _____

Sentence 2. _____

Sentence 3. _____

Sentence 4. _____

Sentence 5. _____

Closing Sentence _____

Expressing an Opinion

Recognizing Both Sides

Model 5

Read the following paragraph. Notice the pattern the author has used.

The statement “teenagers are good for nothing” is untrue. *For one reason* , all teenagers cannot act in the same way because they all have different personalities and have been raised differently. *For another reason* , most teenagers are hard-working and sincere young adults. Most study hard, respect adults, and grow into useful and responsible adults. *Admittedly* , there are those who do get involved in crime, take drugs, and disrupt schools. *But* this is only a very small percentage. To consider all teenagers “good for nothing” because of these kids is wrong.

The organization is the same as all those we have looked at or written so far. However, sometimes when expressing an opinion, it’s a good idea to consider both sides of an issue when coming to a conclusion. By considering both sides, the writer here has presented a much stronger argument.

Notice the arrangement of the transitional words:

For one reason,

For another,

Admittedly,

But,

(“Expressing an Opinion Plan Sheet 1” can be used for an assignment of this type. Similar Transitions may be substituted.)

Expository Paragraphs

Teacher’s Note : Before introducing students to Expository Writing, a short unit in using resource materials could be taught. For the first assignment in this section, my students were asked to consider a place they would like to visit. For the initial assignment, this opening sentence was provided:

If I could visit any place in the world . . .

Rather than use opinions and unconvincing reasons, students were directed to encyclopedias, atlases, travel brochures, and similar materials to find out about the places of interest, cultures, and traditions, to include in the composition. Pertinent facts were picked from these materials to defend their thesis. As a follow up activity, a letter-writing unit was taught in the traditional way, in which students wrote to embassies, the United Nations, and state capitals to request pictures and additional information about the place they wrote.

This worked quite well and all my students enjoyed sharing their mail with the other members of the class. Finally, all the compositions, pictures, brochures, and maps were put on display under the heading of “The Room III Travel Agency.”

Until students master the *correct* use of resource materials, it is suggested that open-ended topic sentences be provided which will lend themselves easily to research. Obviously, the ability of the class should dictate the level of difficulty for the assignments.

Plan Sheet #2

Writing an Expository Paragraph

Topic: _____

Opening Sentence: _____

Details—Facts—Important Information:

Transitional Words and Sentences:

Clincher or Concluding Sentence:

Spelling:

____ _
Vocabulary:
____ _
____ _
____ _

Writing a “How-to Paragraph ”

Pretend you had never heard of a ham and cheese sub. Your friend gave you directions to make one. After reading these instructions, could you make one? Pay attention to the transitional words. They have been underlined for you.

Making a ham and cheese sub is quite simple. Before you start, be sure to have all the ingredients handy. For example , I use fresh Italian bread, ham, cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, green peppers, oil, and salt and pepper.

First , using a sharp knife, cut the bread lengthwise making sure you don’t cut all the way through so that the two halves fall apart. Fold the loaf in half lengthwise.

Next, take the ham slices and place them generously along one slice of the loaf. Now , pile on the cheese the same way. Be sure to cover all the bread.

Then take your lettuce tomatoes onions green peppers, and whatever else you like, and place these on the cheese one layer at a time.

After you have completed this, sprinkle some salad oil along both sides of the bread. Now , season to taste with salt and pepper, garlic powder, or any other seasoning you like.

Finally , gently close both slices together, cut the load in half, and eat.

Activity:

Using this “recipe” as your model, write a “how to paragraph” about making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Be careful! It could get messy!

Student Sample

If I could visit any place in the world

If I could visit any place in the world I would visit Japan. I would like to learn about their way of life, use chop sticks, and wear the clothing the Japanese women wear, especially the long and loose robes.

I would like to go to beautiful Shiraito Waterfall. It is eighty-seven feet high. I would also visit their beautiful Inland Sea Island. It is noted for its shrine which is built on supports running into the sea.

Japan also has a pleasant climate. Two ocean currents influence Japan’s climate. For example, in the winter, the towering mountains of Central Honshu become a paradise for skiers like me. In autumn, the Japanese scene attracts many hikers and campers. Just by reading about all this I know it must be a beautiful scene.

Another sight I would like to see is Lake Kawaguchi. It is one of the five beautiful lakes at the bottom of Mount

Fuji, Japan's highest mountain. Fuji is very beautiful and very famous. The mountain peak reaches 10,000 feet.

A visit to Japan would be an unforgettable experience.

TEACHER'S NOTE : The plan sheet, "Writing an Expository Paragraph" is used exactly as the first plan sheet. Instead of opinions, facts, picked out from resource materials, are used to support the thesis. (This student was a "remedial" student.)

Description Narration

By the time your class has reached this section, use of the plan sheets should be a very simple operation. Continue to follow the suggested sequence. Initially provide examples and models. Have students pick out descriptive passages from their reading materials. With each composition, introduce a new skill. Several student samples are included. The first assignment was a simple narrative of an every day activity, While the second was a composition stressing the use of figurative language. Both came from an "average division."

Included also, are several "poems," written by remedial students. Originally prose, these pieces were transformed into "poems" by the students.

Plan Sheet #3

Writing a Descriptive Paragraph

Topic: _____

I. Opening Statement:

II. Description:

Where were you?—What were you doing? _____

What did you see? _____

What did you hear? _____

What did you taste? _____

What did you touch? _____

What did you feel? _____

III. Sentences:

IV. Clincher or Concluding Sentence:

V. Spelling:

____ _
____ _
____ _

VI. Vocabulary:

____ _
____ _
____ _

Plan Sheet #4

Writing Narratives

Problem & Situation: _____

Interesting Opening Sentence:

Elements of Narrative:

Who? _____

What happened? _____

Where? _____

How did you feel? _____

Sentences:

Spelling:

Vocabulary:

Student Samples

We were shopping around the store and were ready to check out. The lines were very Long, but we finally got there. The cashier was a lady; a young lady. She wore a red dress. She had a very clear complexion and reddish brown hair piled on top of her head. Her eyes, as bright blue as the sky, were highlighted by long lashes. Over her eyelids, she wore blue makeup which matched her eyes.

We laid our belongings on the counter and she pushed down the register buttons with her long red nails. She worked rapidly. When she was finished, she whispered softly "11.50." She opened a bag and started loading our belongings in it. When she was finished packing, we left the store.

The Cop

His hat was big and blue. His eyes were as blue as the fresh spring morning. His badge was like the North Star on a background of dark blue. The belt he wore was tightly woven black leather with a Colt .38 revolver strapped to hip right. To his left was strapped a set of shiny handcuffs. As he quickly walked down the street, he poetically twirled his nightstick like a conductor, leading his orchestra. The sun, directly overhead, beat down on his forehead. His shiny black shoes had the reflection of a mirror.

Student Samples

Rampage of Fear

On a cool and bright afternoon,

With cool breezes and singing birds,
The people downtown rush and push like ants,
On a rampage of fear.

Soldiers at Attention

Soldiers at attention are like an orchard of trees,
All in a row as straight as can be
With the wind in the air, and birds in the trees,
You can even hear them breathe.

Trees

Trees on a windy day sound like the whistle on a steamboat chugging through the harbor on a dark and cold night when the sky is filled with stars.
When the wind blows against the trees, they look like someone dancing at noon doing the "Hustle."

"Advanced" Activities

It is suggested that the guide sheets provided here be used following several of the previous writing activities proposed in the unit. Allow your students to master several of the basic, as well as advanced, skills before assigning any of these activities.

It is suggested that these plan sheets serve as a model for the teacher. They may be modified or altered in any way to facilitate the needs of individual teachers and classroom objectives. From my experience with my eighth graders, I can say that the forms, as they appear here, have worked well with the objectives of my lessons.

Expansion would take place following transferral of the provided information.

Writing about Biographies

Fill in this guide sheet with any acceptable information. You can expand, change, or use any part of the plan sheet to help you write about the biography you have read.

_____ written by _____ is the story of _____ the famous _____. I think the book is because _____.

The most important part of _____ life was when _____.

I think an important lesson can be learned from _____ life. Although _____ he/she _____.

I would recommend this book to _____ because _____.

Writing about Non-Fiction Selections

Fill in the guide sheet with any acceptable information. You can expand, change, or use any part of this plan sheet to help you write about the non-fiction selection you have read.

_____ written by _____ is a non-fiction book about _____. I thought the book was _____ because _____.

In the book, the author told all about _____. _____. He pointed out that _____.

The most interesting part of the book was _____. I learned that _____.

I would recommend this book to other students who _____ because _____.

Writing about Poetry

Fill in the blanks of this guide sheet with any acceptable information. You can expand change, or use any part of this sheet to help you write about the poem you have read.

_____ is a _____ poem

written by _____. I enjoyed the poem because I thought that _____.

The most interesting part of the poem for me was the way the author used _____. This helped me to understand the poem better because _____.

I enjoyed this poem because _____. I think other students might like it too because _____.

Writing about Fiction

Fill in this guide sheet with any acceptable information. You can expand, change, or use any part of the sheet to help you write about the book you have read.

_____ written by _____ is a(n) _____ story about _____ a _____. The story, which takes place _____ during _____, is _____.

The most important character(s) in the story is (are) _____. He/she/they is/are _____. _____ who _____. His/her/their most important decision is when _____. The problem is finally solved when _____. I liked/disliked _____ because _____.

The lesson that _____ teaches is that _____. I approve/disapprove of the ending because _____. The only change I might want to make in the story is that _____.

I would recommend this book to other students who _____ because _____.

Transitional Words and Expressions—Fact Sheet

Many times, although the writer has developed his topic sentence well by providing enough information to support it, the reader might still have trouble following the organization of the paragraph. The sentences may not have been arranged in an easy to follow order. If this occurs, the paragraph is said to lack *COHERENCE*. Sometimes, it is necessary to provide the reader with clues that help him to follow the writer's train of thought more easily. Words which show the relationship of one sentence to another are called *TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS*.

Types of Transitional Words : Transitional words may be classified or arranged according to the kind of relationship they show. If used properly, they will help improve your writing a great deal.

TO SHOW TIME OR STEPS Can be used in explanatory or narrative paragraphs. They help the reader see time and order.

first, second, then, finally, later, soon, now, formerly, after, meanwhile, immediately, in the meantime, afterwards, after a few minutes

PLACE OR POSITION (work well with description) here, nearby, opposite to, on the opposite side, beyond, outside, inside, ahead, behind, above, to the right (left), in the distance, below

BETWEEN IDEAS

Addition : and, and then, further, furthermore, also, likewise, too, again, in addition, then too, moreover, besides, next, first, secondly, thirdly, but most of all

Contrast : but, yet, and yet, however, nevertheless, still, on the other hand, on the contrary, after all, in contrast to this, at the same moment, although that may be true

Comparison : similarly, in a similar way, likewise, in the same way

Illustration : for example, as an example, to illustrate, for instance, in fact

Result : therefore, accordingly, consequently, thus, as a result, resulting in

Summary : (can be used with the clincher sentence) in conclusion, in short, indeed, on the whole

THIS LIST IS NOT COMPLETE. THESE ARE THE MOST COMMON TRANSITIONAL WORDS YOU WILL SEE. LEARN TO USE THEM WELL AND YOUR WRITING WILL IMPROVE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.

TEACHER NOTE : Introduce this list after several assignments. Introducing it prematurely will cause confusion.

The Paragraph : Fact Sheet

A paragraph is a group of related sentences which express a single idea. A paragraph may express an opinion, provide information through the use of facts and details, tell a story, or simply describe a person, a place, an

object, or a feeling. Regardless of the type, a paragraph must always express one idea. The main idea of a paragraph may be stated in one sentence. This sentence is called the TOPIC SENTENCE. (We have been calling this sentence the OPENING STATEMENT.) All of the sentences must stick to the main idea. This is called UNITY. Everything in the paragraph must explain or illustrate the topic sentence.

Types of Paragraphs : There are four (4) basic types of paragraphs. The writer decides which type will best serve his purpose.

ARGUMENTATIVE PARAGRAPHS : Attempt to convince, persuade, or express an opinion through the use of reasons, facts, examples, or explanations. Newspaper editorials, Letters to the Editor, book and movie reviews, and political speeches, are only a few examples of this type of writing.

This is the type of paragraph we have been writing in class the last few weeks .

EXPLANATORY PARAGRAPHS : Give information, facts, informs, or explains.

This is the most common type of paragraph found in text books, encyclopedias, instruction books, many news stories, or any other type of writing whose purpose it is to provide information or explanation.

*This type may also be called an EXPOSITORY PARAGRAPH. (From the word “Expose” which means to show or uncover.)

DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS : Describes persons, places, objects, feelings. Good writers make the reader FEEL as well as SEE what he is describing. All stories have descriptive paragraphs.

NARRATIVE PARAGRAPHS: Tell a story, relate an incident or a series of events. Should tell the reader WHEN, WHERE, WHAT HAPPENED, and HOW THE WRITER FELT. To be effective, all of these questions should be answered.

In longer pieces of writing, the author may use several of these types. Many times, the paragraphs will contain elements of each type. That is, a narrative paragraph should have description in it, a descriptive paragraph may have narration in it. As you become better writers, you will be able to do this!

TEACHER NOTE: Introduce these “Textbook” definitions after your students have been exposed to all four types of paragraphs.

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*(Briller's books provide some good paragraph models.)

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