

Elements of Writing Instruction

Part I

Purposes Today

1. To demystify writing goals
 2. To encourage parents
-

General Assertions

- ❑ Writing is a process.
 - ❑ Don't rush!
 - ❑ Learning advances as children grow.
-

Writing is a Process

For each work, there are 5 distinct steps

1. Prewrite
2. Draft
3. Edit
4. Polish
5. Present

You have 12 years... don't rush!

Over the years, teach them to...

- Construct simple sentences
- Organize paragraphs
- Join paragraphs into papers
- Polish all elements into carefully crafted written communications

Learning advances as they grow

The older they get, the more they learn

- When they are young, keep it simple
- Students master complex constructions as they mature physically
 - It does not help to push beyond normal physical development
 - Remedial work goes faster than you expect!

So, what is “mastery”?

Competently and consistently...

- ❑ Understand & use complex sentence syntaxes and styles
 - ❑ Employ clear paragraph organization with good transitions between these
 - ❑ Know when to use specific organizing structures or writing styles
-

Four Basic Elements

1. Strong sentences
 2. Solid paragraphs
 3. Skillful transitions
 4. General structure and style
-

Strong Sentences

The traditional definition has three parts:

- A group of words that expresses a complete thought.
- It begins with a capital letter and ends with proper punctuation.
- It always contains a subject and a verb.

Strong Sentences

Content

- Strong sentences use specific, concrete words that you can teach.
- Example:
The flower was in the vase on the table.

Strong Sentences

Structure

- Varies with the piece
- Start simple
- Grow more complex
- Advanced writers use variety!

Strong Sentences

Examples:

- The man **ran** down the street and feverishly **checked** his watch.
- Feverishly **checking** his watch, the man **ran** down the street.
- **Running** down the street, he feverishly **checked** his watch.

Four Basic Elements

1. Strong sentences
 2. Solid paragraphs
-

Solid Paragraphs

Traditional definition:

- A group of sentences
- Collectively express a single idea
- Begins with a topic sentence (or cue)
- Has a feeling of ending (or conclusion)

This definition is great for stand-alone paragraphs. You will need to add to it.

Solid Paragraphs

Structure

1. A topic sentence
2. Body sentences
3. A concluding sentence

Solid Paragraphs

Content of opening sentence(s)

1. Purpose: guide the reader!
2. Typical opening sentences
 - Hook
 - Topic
 - Transition

Solid Paragraphs

Content of body sentences

- Body sentences provide information
- They need to relate to the cue sentence

Solid Paragraphs

Paragraphs need a feeling of ending

- Young students: concluding sentence
- Middle students: concluding sentence with a twist
- Older students: summary and transition

Four Basic Elements

1. Strong sentences
 2. Solid paragraphs
 3. Skillful transitions
-

Skillful Transitions

What are transitions?

- Words, phrases or sentences
- Signals to the reader

Skillful Transitions

Skillful transitions = crafted ones

- They don't come naturally!
- Students should compile a list
- Students can learn through practice
 - When to use them
 - How to use them

Four Basic Elements

1. Strong sentences
 2. Solid paragraphs
 3. Skillful transitions
 4. General structure and style
-

Structure and Style

What are these?

- Genres use specific **structures**
- **Styles**: of sentences, paragraphs, and overall works
- Structure & style affect the message!

Structure and Style

Examples:

- Narrative (story)
- Newspaper article
- Compare/contrast essay
- Expository essays

Structure and Style

What you can do:

- Style is a difficult thing to teach
- However, various styles can be copied
- Styles have specific effects on readers
- Students can, at the very least, notice styles (and copy after analyzing them)

Conclusion

- ❑ Most parents can teach writing
 - ❑ It does require three things:
 1. A plan with clear goals (curriculum)
 2. Diligence (you and your student)
 3. Accountability (grading)
-