

## **Transitional Guided Writing (J+)**

**Context:** *Students write a response to the story they read during guided reading while the teacher supports the writing process and teaches specific skills and strategies the students need to learn. If the students can independently write a meaningful, organized response, guided writing is probably not necessary.*

**Purpose:** *The goal is to teach struggling writers how to become more proficient writers by applying the skills and strategies that have been taught during the small group lesson. The teacher provides support at the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky) and gradually releases his or her support as the student internalizes the focus strategy. By framing the response so that it relates to the guided reading text, students are extending their comprehension and learning how to respond to reading (CCSS).*

### **Procedure:**

The transitional lesson plan usually takes three days with each daily session lasting about 20 minutes. During the first two days of guided reading, students read the book with the teacher's support and spend the last three to five minutes on guided word study. The word study activities usually target spelling skills related to vowel patterns, understanding the silent "e" feature, or constructing a word with multiple syllables. The third day is spent on guided writing. There is no limit to the type of responses transitional readers can write during guided writing. Aim for a format that can be completed during the 20-minute timeframe since the purpose of guided writing is to provide teacher support while students write. The following is a partial list of responses. If you have a specific comprehension focus or Common Core Reading Standard for your guided reading lesson (such as asking questions or summarizing), match the guided writing response to the focus strategy. Regardless of the response format, always plan with the students before they write by discussing the story and listing a few important words students should use in their responses.

### **Step 1: Analyze Writing Samples and Select a Target Skill**

Analyze samples from students' independent writing to determine strengths and weaknesses. Identify the next focus for your guided writing lessons by using the "Target Skills for 3-5 Struggling Writers" found on my website: [www.janrichardsonguidedwriting.com](http://www.janrichardsonguidedwriting.com).

### **Step 2: Select a Response Format for Guided Writing**

Consider the genre, strategy focus, and student writing needs to select a format for the guided writing response.

### **Response Options for Fiction:**

- **Beginning – Middle – End (BME)** – Students help you generate a few important words from the beginning, middle and end of the story. Students then use the key words to summarize the story by sequencing important events. As students become more proficient, this can take the form of a three-paragraph response.
- **Five-Finger Retell** – Develop a plan by generating a few key words for each element of the 5-finger retelling: characters, setting, problem, events, and ending. Then students write three paragraphs. The first paragraph describes the main characters, setting and problem. The second paragraph summarizes important events from the beginning and middle of the story. The final paragraph describes how the story ended.

- **Somebody-Wanted-But-So** (MacOn, Bewell & Vogt, 1991) – Students use this framework to summarize the gist of the story by describing what the character wanted to achieve (somebody-wanted), what obstacles stood in the way of achieving this goal (but), and how the problem was solved (so). For a complex story, students can string together a series of *somebody-wanted-but-so* statements by using the transitional word, “then.” For example: *Clare* (the somebody) wanted to try out for the pirate role in the school play, but she was afraid to do it by herself so she brought the parrot with her. Then the parrot sat on her shoulder and gave her courage.

- **Problem and Solution** – Students write two paragraphs, one describing the problem of the main character and a second explaining how the problem was solved.

- **Problem (feelings) and Solution (feelings)** – Students include the character’s feelings as they describe the problem and solution of the story. Example: *Clare’s problem was she felt shy because she didn’t want to try out for the play by herself. She solved her problem by bringing her pet parrot to the tryout. This helped her feel more confident.*

- **Track the character’s feelings for the B-M-E.** Students summarize the major events in the plot by recalling the character’s feelings and what caused those feelings. Before students write, record several “feeling” words on sticky notes and distribute them to the students. Students insert the sticky notes on the page in the book where the character felt that way. This boosts students’ vocabulary and steers them from using common words like “happy,” “sad,” and “mad.”

| B                  | M                | E                  |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| excited<br>nervous | shy<br>terrified | proud<br>confident |

Using the key words from the plan, students then write three short paragraphs describing the character’s feelings at the beginning, the middle and the end. For example:

*In the beginning, Clare felt **excited** because she was going to ride a pony. She was **nervous** because this was the very first time she was on a pony. Her friend, Abby, went with her to calm her nerves.*

*In the middle, Clare went for a ride on the pony. She was **shy** about telling her pony what to do. When the pony took off running, Clare was **terrified** she would fall off.*

*At the end of the story, Clare was **proud** that she had learned how to ride a pony. The next time she rides a horse, she will be more **confident**.*

- **Event – Details** – Use this format to help students write a sequenced retelling that includes the three to four main events and details. Create a graphic organizer that includes key words for both the main events and a detail. A detail might be something a character said or thought, an action a character did, or a feeling a character had at that point in the story. Here is an example of this format for the story of “The Grasshopper and the Ant.”

| Season | Event                          | Detail          |
|--------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Summer | Grasshopper sang<br>Ant worked | lazy<br>food    |
| Winter | Grasshopper cold<br>Ant warm   | knocked<br>kind |
| Summer | Grasshopper<br>worked          | lesson          |

*When it was summer, the grasshopper sang and danced. He was lazy and did not save any food for the winter. The ant worked hard all summer and told the grasshopper he should get food for the winter.*

*Then winter came. The grasshopper was cold and hungry. He knocked on the ant's door to get some food. The ant was warm and had food to eat. He was kind to the grasshopper and let him inside so he wouldn't die.*

*The next summer, the grasshopper worked to gather food. He learned his lesson.*

- **V.I.P. - Very Important Part (adapted from Hoyt)** – During guided reading, the students flag the important parts of the plot guided by the character's actions and the illustrations. For their guided writing response, students use their V.I.P. flags to summarize and sequence the most important events in the story.

- **Chapter Summaries** – Direct students to the table of contents and ask each student to write a summary of one chapter. Before students write, list some key words on sticky notes and have students select the key words that match the specific chapter they are summarizing. Students should use the key words, chapter titles, and illustrations to write a summary about their assigned chapter.

### **Response Options for Nonfiction:**

- **Chapter Summaries** – Assign one chapter for each student to summarize. Before students write, list some key words on sticky notes and have students select the key words that match the specific chapter they are summarizing. If the book has an index, ask students to find key words in the index that go with the chapter they are summarizing. Students use the key words, chapter titles, and illustrations to write a summary about their assigned chapter.

- **Cause-effect relationships** – This response can be used for fiction or informational texts, but it is most effective if “cause and effect” was the focus strategy for the guided reading lesson. Select an important concept from the text and generate words that support the cause and effect of that concept. For example, if the students read a book about the Civil War, they might write a paragraph about the causes of the war and a paragraph about the effects.

- **Bio poem (for biographies)** - Students write a poem about a famous person. Guide students to use some framework that includes important information and events. See page 195 in *Next Step in Guided Reading*.

- **Key-idea poem** – Students use important ideas from the text to write a non-rhyming poem. See page 196 in *Next Step in Guided Reading*.

- **Compare/contrast** – Students select two topics from the table of contents or index and write one paragraph describing ways the topics are alike and one paragraph telling how they are different.

- **Main Idea/Details** – Students select one main idea and write a paragraph that uses details and examples from the text to describe or explain the main idea.

### **Step 3: Help students plan**

Students should always draft a simple plan using key words and phrases from the text. At first you will need to help students construct a plan, but gradually you'll be able to transfer this responsibility to the students. Be sure you check each plan before students begin to write.

### **Step4: Scaffold students as they write**

Once you select a target skill for each student, write the skill on a sticky note. Place the sticky note in front of the student to remind him or her of the target skill. Scaffold the student during guided writing until he or she demonstrates the target skill without your support.

| <b>Target Skills</b>                       | <b>Scaffolds</b>  |
|--|---|
| <b>Legible handwriting</b>                 | Teach the student how to use handwriting paper and an alphabet strip to produce correct letter formation. Prompt him or her to use only lower case letters except at the beginning of a sentence.   |
| <b>Spacing</b>                             | Prompt: "Pick up your pencil and move it over after you write each word." If necessary, draw a line for each word in the sentence until the student starts to space independently.  |
| <b>Phonetic spelling</b>                   | During word study <u>and</u> guided writing, use sound boxes to help the student segment sounds in one-syllable words. Encourage "noisy writing." The goal at this point is not accurate but phonetic spelling.   |
| <b>Make sense – Use standard structure</b> | Orally rehearse each sentence with the student and correct structure if necessary. Ask student to repeat sentence using standard structure. Encourage short sentences the student can remember. Student should say each word softly as s/he writes the sentence.  |
| <b>Monitor for meaning</b>                 | If a student leaves out words, remind him or her to slowly reread each sentence using the pencil eraser to point to each word. This helps them monitor and correct their writing.   |
| <b>Spelling</b>                            | Teach the student how to use a single-page personal word wall (Richardson, <i>Next step in Guided Reading</i> , p. 153) to find frequently misspelled words. Also encourage students to use the guided reading book as a spelling resource. Put a star on the student's paper when s/he uses a spelling resource.   |
| <b>Complete sentences</b>                  | If you notice many run-on sentences, tell students they can only have one "and" per sentence.<br>If the sentence lacks a subject or verb, teach students to orally rehearse each sentence using one or two key words from their plan and to make a fist to indicate the end of the sentence. The goal is simple, complete sentences.  |
| <b>Punctuation (periods)</b>               | Prompt the student to rehearse the sentence and make a fist after saying the last word. The "fist" is a physical reminder to put the period.  |
| <b>Capital letters</b>                     | Prompt the student to check the word that follows each period to see if it begins with a capital letter. Always teach periods before you target capital letters. If students mix upper and lower case letters while writing, tell them they can only use capital letters for the first word of the sentence and characters' names. Provide a small alphabet strip with upper and lower case letters, if necessary |
| <b>Multisyllabic words (spells)</b>        | Many transitional writers struggle spelling words that have more than one syllable. Teach them to clap the parts of big words and stretch out each part as they write it.   |

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|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Use key word plan</b>           | If students struggle coming up with ideas for writing or lack a clear focus, a key word plan is a great scaffold. First help students plan with just three words (one for the beginning, one for the middle and one for the end). Ask them to use the first key word to write their first sentence. Once they use the key word, ask them to check it off their plan. Repeat the process for using each key word. This will also keep students focused as they write. Once they can use a three-word plan, extend the plan to include more key words.  |
| <b>Details</b>                     | Use a two-column plan with key words for events listed in the first column and key words for details in the second. Do not allow the student to write complete sentences in the plan – only use key words. The details might include something the character said, thought, or did. The student writes one sentence about each event and adds a sentence for the detail.  |
| <b>Quotation marks</b>             | After students begin to add dialogue for their details, teach them how to put quotation marks around the words that are spoken. Once they understand this skill, tell them to use a capital letter for the first word in the dialogue. Finally, teach them to use a comma to separate the words that are spoken and the person who said the words. Teach this process one step at a time.<br>Step 1: Jack said “who took my book bag?”<br>Step 2: Jack said “Who took my book bag?”<br>Step 3: Jack said, “Who took my book bag?”   |
| <b>Use interesting vocabulary</b>  | First teach students how to make their writing more interesting by adding descriptive words: color, number, size, adjectives, adverbs, etc.<br>Then ask them to select one boring sentence from their piece and show them how to rewrite it to make it more interesting:<br>Boring: The grasshopper asked for food.<br>Scaffold: The _____, _____ grasshopper asked for _____.<br>Interesting: The shivering, starving grasshopper begged for something to eat.<br>Before students write, list several interesting words from the story and tell students they must use these words as they write their response. |
| <b>Organization Stays on topic</b> | Some transitional writers have trouble with organization. Their writing doesn’t follow a logical sequence. Always have students plan with key words before they write. Prompt students to refer to their plan as they write so they stay focused. After they use a key word, they should check it off before they write the next sentence.  |
| <b>Transition words</b>            | Ask students to look through their reading book to find transition words that come at the beginning of a sentence. Make a list of these words for fiction and nonfiction writing. Ask students to use some of these words in their paragraphs.<br>Transition words for fiction: In the beginning, then, next, after that, after a while, finally.<br>Transition words for nonfiction: first (secondly, thirdly), for example, for instance, on the other hand, furthermore, in conclusion, above all, therefore, etc.   |
| <b>Sentence variety</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to combine two ideas into one compound sentence, but do not allow more than one “and” per sentence. Teach students to combine thoughts by using use more time passage indicators such as “While, Before, Eventually, When...”</li> <li>• Show students how to include a statement, a question and an exclamatory sentence in one paragraph.</li> </ul> <p>Example 1(no variety): A bat uses its senses to find prey. A bat uses echolocation.</p>   |

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|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | <p>The bat sends out a sound to find its food. Bats are cool.</p> <p>Example 2 (with variety): Do you know how bats use their senses? They send out a sound to locate their prey. The sound bounces back like an echo, and this is called echolocation. COOL...cool...cool!</p>  |
| <b>Indents each paragraph</b> | <p>Teach this skill once students know how to write a beginning, middle and end. Give students three colored dot stickers. Have them write a B, M, and E on each sticker. Then tell them to put the B sticker on their paper before they write about the beginning, the M sticker when they start to write about the middle, and the E sticker when they are ready to write about the end. This scaffold reminds them to indent a few spaces as they write each paragraph.</p> <p>You can use the “sticker scaffold” for writing any piece. Give students the number of stickers that corresponds to the number of paragraphs they will need. For example, if they are writing about “causes and effects,” they’ll need two stickers. One to help them indent the first paragraph that describes the causes of an event, and the second sticker to remind them to indent the second paragraph when they write about the effects. There are obviously other issues to consider when deciding where to indent a paragraph, but this activity will help struggling writers begin to understand the process.</p> |

“The Punctuation Rap” - by Jan Richardson

The Punctuation Rap is a game we play,  
It's fun to do, and we can learn that way.

Take the period, the period; he's not hard to understand.  
You'll find him at the end of a statement or command.  
He marks abbreviations, shortens words that are long.  
Don't forget the period; he's small but strong.

Question mark, question mark, what did you say?  
He follows a question, that's the only way.

”Wow, Awesome, Rad, Hurray!”  
The exclamation mark is next; he's excited to play.  
Don't use him too much; he won't be special that way.

The comma is next; he is used a lot.  
He can separate a list of some groceries you've bought.  
You'll find him in the middle of the year and the date,  
Between two adjectives, or a city and state.

You can join two sentences with a “but” or an “and,”  
Just remember the comma, he will give you a hand.  
There's one more place that a comma has been,  
He's after a clause that tells you when.

The dash – the dash – he's here then he's gone.  
If you need to make a pause, you can bring him along.

The colon likes to show a list that will come.  
His brother the “semi” will not be out done.  
The semi-colon joins two sentences with no “and.”  
If there are too many commas, he can lend a hand.

So remember this rap; it will make you smart.  
Punctuation is easy; you can learn it by heart!

