

## **Emergent & Early Guided Writing (A-I)**

**Context:** *Students write a brief response to the story they read during guided reading. At emergent levels, use dictated sentences that include known high-frequency words, the new sight word that was taught that day, and at least one unknown word students must stretch out to hear the sounds. Once students gain control over a large bank of high-frequency words (40-50), the response becomes more student-generated.*

**Purpose:** *The goal is for students to learn how to apply the skills and strategies that have been taught during the small group lesson. You provide support at the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky). 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.*

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

• **Dictated Sentence** – Carefully craft a sentence that relates to the story, includes the target sight word for the lesson, and reviews other sight words you have taught this group. Make sure students rehearse the entire sentence before they begin to write. Prompt students to reread during and after they write. This helps them remember the sentence and monitor for meaning.

• **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 write 3-4 sentences about the text.

• **BME with Transition Words** – Post the following transition words and list one key word next to each transition word. Students use the transition word and the key word to write five sentences about the story.

- At the beginning
- Then
- Next
- After that
- Finally

• **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).

Example: *Little Dinosaur* (the somebody) wanted to eat a dinosaur egg, but the big dinosaur came, so she ran back to her hole.

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

Example: *The Brown house was on fire. The helicopter poured water on the house to put the fire out.*

- **Problem (feelings) and Solution (feelings)** – Students write four sentences that explain the problem and solution.

Sentence 1: What was the problem?

Sentence 2: How did the character feel?

Sentence 3: How was the problem solved?

Sentence 4: How did the character feel at the end?

Example: *The Brown house was on fire. The boy felt scared because he couldn't find his cat. The helicopter poured water on the house to put the fire out. The boy was happy because his cat was safe.*

- **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.

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

- **Dictated Sentence** – Carefully craft a sentence that includes the target sight word for the lesson, and reviews other sight words you have taught this group. Make sure students rehearse the entire sentence before they begin to write.

- **Key Words** – Students tell you what they learned from the book as you record 3-5 key words. Students use the key words to retell what they read.

Example: *First they put the milk in the bowl. Then they add sugar and ice. Finally, the milk freezes to make ice cream.*

- **Picture Prompt** – Students select one picture from the book and write a few sentences that describe what they learned about that topic.

- **Fact – feeling** – Students write a sentence that explains one fact in the book. Then they add a sentence that describes their feelings.

Example: *A spider is furry and has 8 legs. I am afraid of spiders because they could bite me.*

- **Fact-Detail** – Co-construct a plan with a key word for the fact on one side and a key word for the detail on the other. Students write a sentence about the fact and another about the detail. The following is an example for a book about bees.

Fact	Detail
stinger	hurt
honey	food
wax	candles

Example: *Bees have a stinger on their bottom. It will hurt if you get stung by a bee. Bees make honey in their hives. We put honey on our food to make it sweet. Bees make wax. We use the wax to make candles.*

### **Target Skills and Strategies by Level:**

*Struggling writers in the intermediate grades and almost all primary writers need a lot of supported writing experiences before skills are internalized. The following is a partial listing of common strategies and skills for each level. Use it as a guide to help you plan appropriate guided writing experiences. Use the practice page to teach letter formation, practice sight words, and provide sound boxes for students to use as they work on unknown, phonetic words. You can also teach students how to use a word they know (“my”) to write a word they don’t know (“by”).*

**Pre-A** – Students at this level are still learning letters, sounds, and early print concepts such as left to right directionality and one-to-one matching. After reading a book together, dictate a short sentence for the group to write interactively on a sentence strip.

➤ **Target skills and strategies for Pre-A interactive writing:**

- Segment initial consonant sounds.
- Use an alphabet chart to link letters and sounds.
- Practice correct letter formation.

**Level A (1)** – Students use individual journals to write a simple dictated sentence of three to five words. The sentence should include the new sight word that was taught that day. Encourage students to stretch unknown words and record dominant consonant sounds.

➤ **Target skills and strategies for Level A:**

- Segment and record the initial consonant sound in each word.
- Hear and record long vowel sounds in words (with prompting)
- Learn to write about ten high-frequency words in text (the, my, to, go, see, can, is, me, am, etc.).
- Continue to work on letter formation.
- Draw a line for each word. This helps student learn to put a space between each word.  
I like to run.

**Level B (2)** – Dictate a sentence (five to seven words) that relates to the story. The sentence should include the new sight word that was taught that day, other known high-frequency words, and at least one unknown word students must stretch out. After students repeat the sentence several times, they write it independently as you circulate and support individual students.

➤ **Target skills and strategies for Level B:**

- Reread the sentence to predict and monitor (with prompting).
- Hear and record dominant consonant sounds in each word.
- Hear and record long vowel sounds in words.
- Hear and record short “a” and short “o” sounds in words (with prompting).
- Learn to write about 15-20 high-frequency words in text.
- Introduce a period at the end of the sentence.
- Space with the support of the lines.

**Level C (3/4)** – Dictate a sentence (seven to ten words) that relates to the story. The sentence should include the new sight word that was taught that day, other known high-frequency words, and several unknown words students must stretch out to hear sounds. If time permits, the teacher may dictate a second sentence or guide students to construct their own sentence using the pattern from the dictated sentence.

➤ Target skills and strategies for Level C:

- Remember and reread the sentence without prompting.
- Say each word slowly as you write.
- Learn to write about 30 high-frequency words.
- Hear and record CVC sounds in sequence with an emphasis on the medial vowel.
- Space between words without the support of teacher-drawn lines.
- Put a period at the end of the sentence without prompting.
- Introduce a capital letter at the beginning of the sentence.

**Level D (5/6)** – Dictate two sentences that relate to the story. The sentences should include many high-frequency words that have been taught in the guided reading lessons. Always include the new sight word for the lesson. In addition, the sentence should be crafted to include the phonics focus such as digraphs (th, sh, ch) and/or simple endings (-s, -ing, -ed). Avoid non-phonetic high-frequency words that have not been taught. Students should now be spacing without your support. Transition from using unlined paper to a paper containing four or five lines. Students will learn how to write each letter so it touches the line. You may need to provide instruction on letters that fall below the line (g, j, p, y).

➤ Target skills and strategies for Level D:

- Reread each sentence to monitor for meaning.
- Say unknown words slowly to segment sounds.
- Hear and record short vowels with little prompting.
- Hear and record digraphs (sh, ch, th) in words.
- Only use a capital letter for the first word in the sentence. All other words should be written with lowercase letters.
- Correctly add endings to known words (looked, going, likes, etc.).
- Learn to write letters that touch and fall below the line (g, j, p, y).
- Learn to write 30-40 high-frequency words in text.
- Space without prompting.
- Correctly use periods without prompting.

**Level E (7/8)** – If students have developed automaticity with a large bank of high-frequency words, it is now appropriate to use student-generated responses. Frameworks that work well at this level include writing two sentences about the story (something that happened at the beginning and the middle or end) or writing about the problem and solution of the story. Allow students to use the pictures in the book to help them as they write, but do not let them copy from the book. For example,

you might say, “Find the picture that tells you the problem in the story. Write a sentence about that picture.” If students are responding to an informational text, they could write two things they learned from the story. Again, they are permitted to use the pictures if they need help coming up with ideas.

Once students can retell the story without the support of pictures, you can transition them to constructing a key word plan. Draw a B - M - E plan on a white board and ask students to tell you one thing that happened at the beginning. Support them in identifying one word you can write under the “B” to help them remember that event. Continue to process for the middle and the end. As they write three sentences about the story, they should use the B-M-E key word plan to help them stay focused.

If students are still struggling with spelling high-frequency words, continue to dictate sentences that contain many high-frequency words. Most children at this level are ready to transition to simple handwriting paper with a dotted line to guide letter size. Teach students how to use the handwriting paper to form “tall” and “short” letters.

➤ Target skills and strategies for **Level E**:

- Write two or three sentences about the story.
- Learn to write about 40-50 high-frequency words in text.
- Hear and record initial blends in words.
- Hear and record endings (s, ing, ed, er) on known and unfamiliar words.
- Hear and record known parts in words.
- Learn to use handwriting paper.
- Before writing, rehearse each sentence to learn where to put the period.
- Capitalize proper names in text (with support).
- Use pictures or a simple key-word plan to write about the story.

**Level F (9/10)** – Students should now have a large bank of high-frequency words they can write. They should also be able to write any one-syllable word phonetically. However, do not expect correct use of vowel combinations and the silent “e” rule. Few children will have internalized those skills at this level. Students should also be able to construct their own simple summaries guided by the illustrations and/or key words in the book. Appropriate formats include the Beginning – Middle – End (BME) and the Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS). If students are still learning English, be sure to have them rehearse each sentence with you so you can correct the structure. Then have the student repeat the sentence before writing it. Emphasize the importance of rereading each sentence before writing the next one.

➤ Target skills and strategies for **Level F**:

- Write a BME (three sentences) using a key-word plan.
- Introduce the SWBS.
- Build automaticity with 40-50 high-frequency words.
- Hear and record initial and final blends in one-syllable words.
- Break a two-syllable word and stretch out each part.
- Build fluency with correct letter formation.
- Introduce quotation marks to frame dialogue.

**Level G/H (11-14)** – Children’s writing fluency should continue to improve as they move up in reading levels. By now they should be able to write three to five sentences in 10 minutes. You may still need to help students plan their response by listening to their ideas before they write them. The oral rehearsal is especially important for children who are learning English as a second language. The BME response is now extended to include four or five sentences, and students will take on more responsibility for writing the SWBS.

➤ Target skills and strategies for Levels G/H:

- Construct a BME (four – five sentences) with some support.
- Construct a SWBS with support.
- Add –er, -ly to known words (e.g. player, lovely).
- Use quotation marks in writing dialogue (with support).
- Apply the silent “e” rule in writing (with support).
- Spell one-syllable words phonetically with correct application of skills that have been taught.
- Prompt students to apply vowel combinations you have taught (ay, all, ar, or, ee, oo, etc.).
- Include some transition words: then, next, etc.

**Level I (15-16)** – Since the guided reading lesson framework still allows only 10 minutes for guided writing, expect only four to five sentences (although students will be able to write longer responses). As you teach additional vowel patterns during word study, prompt for the application in writing. Students should have a strong grasp of the concept of a sentence and the need for capital letters and end punctuation. Letter formation should be improving.

➤ Target skills and strategies for Level I:

- Independently construct three to five sentences that sequence events.
- Add a transition word for each sentence: “At the beginning...Then...Next... After that...Finally.” Post these words in your guided reading area so students can refer to them as they write their retelling.
- Apply the silent “e” rule in writing.
- Introduce the concept of dropping the silent “e” when adding “ing” (e.g. hiking, riding, coming).
- Write new words using patterns from known words. For example, students might use the known word, “look” to write “shook.”
- Apply more vowel patterns as you teach them during guided word study (–ow, ew, -oa, -ight, -oy, etc.). Students will likely make errors with phonic elements that can be represented in more than one way. For example “right” might be spelled “rite” and “house” might be “howse.”