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Sincerely,
Karen Haag

My Favorite Conventions Lessons; They Work!

I draw a strong line between revision and editing. Think about revision as making the meaning as clear as possible. Editing is using correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. To get the job done, I teach at least one convention lesson and 4 how-to-write lessons per week following the editing cycle contract as described on this Webpage. Once we reach the halfway mark in a genre study, each student selects a piece and revises it with the help of his peers and me. Once the piece is in sequence and the words explain the story, argument or research as best each child can, it's time to edit. This handout is a list of my favorite conventions lessons I teach at those times. To help, I also list the Common Core Language Progressive Skills on this handout as well.



"The Error Beast is to be welcomed and tamed, not slain."

-Constance Weaver

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE for Language Progressive Skills

<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards/language-standards-k-5/language-progressive-skills-by-grade/>

STANDARD	Introduced
L.3.1f. Ensure subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement.	3rd grade
L.3.a. Choose words and phrases for effect.	3rd grade
L.3.3a. Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.	4th grade
L.4.1g. Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., <i>to/too/two</i> ; <i>there/their</i>).	4th grade
L.4.3a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely. ¹	4th grade
L.4.3b. Choose punctuation for effect.	4th grade
L.5.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.	5th grade
L.5.2a. Use punctuation to separate items in a series. ²	5th grade
L.6.1c. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person.	6th grade
L.6.1d. Recognize and correct vague pronouns (i.e., ones with unclear or ambiguous antecedents).	6th grade
L.6.1e. Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language.	6th grade
L.6.2a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.	6th grade
L.6.3a. Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. ³	6th grade
L.6.3b. Maintain consistency in style and tone.	6th grade
L.7.1c. Place phrases and clauses within a sentence, recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers.	7th grade
L.7.3a. Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.	7th grade
L.8.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.	8th grade
L.9–10.1a. Use parallel structure.	9-10th grade

Conventions Description from North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

- Conventions involve correctness in sentence formation, usage and mechanics.
- Conventions assume specific grade-appropriate meaning when applies to a student response.
- In order to demonstrate a reasonable control, the student must have a sufficient amount.
- Errors, if present, do not impede the reader's understanding of the ideas conveyed.
- In addition, severities of errors are demonstrated in patterns of errors that are present in the student response.

Conventions Rubric

- Exhibits reasonable control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task.
- Exhibits reasonable control of sentence formation.
- Exhibits reasonable control of standard usage including agreement, tense and case.
- Exhibits reasonable control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Editing Invitations

One of my new favorite authors is Jeff Anderson. His editing ideas, published by Stenhouse, mirror my own in terms of embedding conventions lessons into writing instruction. He also invites students to discover theories about language for themselves and to use conventions correctly.

Editing Invitations are used as warm-up activities that coax students to pay attention to mechanics, style and author's craft as one of the steps inherent to good writing. Then they're asked to go a step further and find a place in their writing where they could use the same convention. Hopefully, the noticing will transfer to students stopping and thinking independently about how punctuation is used when they're reading as well.

Here is how an invitation works. The students might be given time to notice this sample from *Bud Not Buddy*:

"What? I'm sorry to hear that, Bud. So you stay with your daddy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right in Grand Rapids?"

"Yes, sir."

There is a lot to discover in this example, but let's say students notice that two different characters are speaking to one another. With possible prompting by the teacher, they discuss how the author shows who is speaking without writing down the characters' names.



Through partner-share, class discussion and possibly more probing, I would want my students to notice that authors use quotation marks to show dialogue. Furthermore, authors indent each time a new character speaks. The visual helps readers keep track of who is speaking. The quotation marks are not used for the *writer* - but as an aid for the *reader*.

After noticing this editing feature, I would ask my students to insert dialogue into their stories using the same structure. Or, before asking students to add dialogue to their writing, I might teach how to use quotation marks. Another lesson might be on what constitutes good dialogue. This particular "Invitation to Edit" would dovetail nicely with narrative or memoir writing.

Teachers can ask students to notice any thing and then construct an understanding of how and why the author used the convention or even author's craft. In the lower grades, teachers might point out beautiful writing from shared reading that includes commas in a series, periods, or questions marks and ask students to hypothesize how the convention is used. In the upper grades, teachers or students might find sentences to illustrate the correct use of to, too, and two, colons or semi-colons. The last step is always to try using the convention correctly no matter the grade level.

Another Way to Invite Students to Edit

Students can do the collecting as well. They might bring in sentences with apostrophes from books they're reading, for example. They copy each sentence where they find an apostrophe on a separate sticky note or index card. In teams, they sort them into categories. Hopefully, teams will notice that the words sort into possessives and contractions. Although the students may not know the terms, they can see patterns to explain how the apostrophe is used. They should construct an understanding before the teacher names the terms if no one else does. Work on the skill until the students can write to explain how to use an apostrophe and until the teacher see students using apostrophes correctly in their writing. It's a pretty good bet that if they can use them and explain them, they will be able to remember the difference between possessives and contractions. However, you can see why some skills take the entire unit to remember to mastery.

Editing Invitations or Investigations work much better for me than explanations. The teacher simply invites students to notice and analyze good writing. Editing Invitations are fun because there is a mystery to them. Asking students to use what was just learned in their writing is brilliant. The joy of writing is preserved.

Parts of Speech

Adapted from "A Closer Look at Interactive Writing," *The Reading Teacher*, 61(6), pp. 496-497, Elizabeth Patterson. Megan Schaller, Jeannine Clemens, March 2008.

1. Talk about parts of speech and where the words came from. Or, read a book that focuses on a part of speech. (*Nouns and Verbs Have a Field Day* by Robin Pulver. *If You Were a Noun* by Michael Dahl. *Adjectives* by Karen Shackelford. *When You Catch an Adjective* by Ben Yagoda. *If You Were a Verb* by Michael Dahl. *Dearly, Nearly, Sincerely: What is an Adverb* by P. Cleary and Brian Gable.) Engage the students so that they are interested in becoming experts on one part of speech.
2. Students choose a part of speech and learn everything they can about it; they become a group of experts.
3. Students discuss their part of speech and use resources to help them uncover a complete understanding.
4. The students in the group "share the pen" and write their definitions and examples on chart paper.
5. Each group presents to the class.
6. The groups get their posters "camera ready" using one another as editors: content is correct; no spelling, capitalization, or punctuation mistakes; grammar is correct, etc.

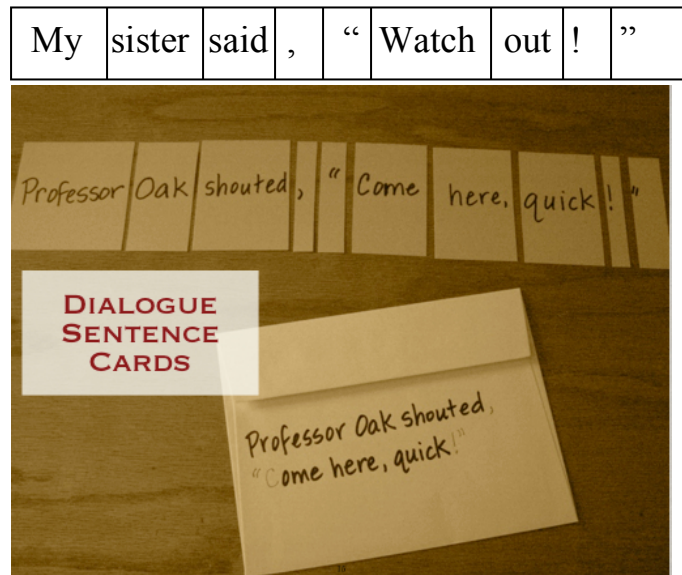
Display the work for future reference.

Dialogue Sentence Cards

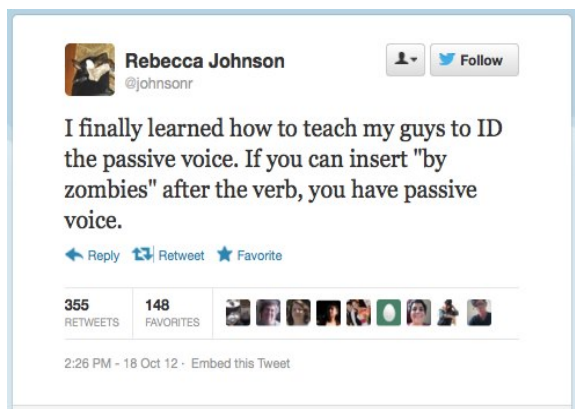
Once students collect examples of quotes, sort

them into groups, and draw conclusions about how to use quotations marks, commas and capital letters. To understand how to edit differently depending on whether the quote is at the beginning of the sentence or at the end, try this 'game'. Copy a sentence that includes a quote on a sentence strip. Cut the strip apart word by word. Also, cut away each piece of punctuation. Put all the parts into an envelope.

Ask students to work in groups of 3 or 4 to put the sentence back together again in the right order. Encourage them to use their daybooks and resource books to help them remember how the punctuation and capitalization works. The talking and the figuring out they do will help them remember how to use quotation marks! Finally, they should check the answer card to be sure everything is in order. Quotation puzzles work. Put them in centers to be used during free time.



Passive Voice: If you insert "by zombies" after the verb, students will recognize they used passive verbs. Try it!



She was chased (by zombies). (Passive Voice)
Zombies chased (by zombies) her. (Active Voice)

Read more about professor Rebecca Johnson's quick trick:
<http://auwritingcenter.blogspot.com/2012/10/identify-passive-voice-with-zombies.html>

Proofreader's Log

Whether I confer with students or correct their work (sparingly), students copy misspelled words and other conventions into their proofreader's log. They write (1) the problem, (2) the problem corrected, and (3) an explanation so they will remember. They check their work against their personal proofreader's log before handing in a paper in any content area.

My directions are these: Hand me a completed, final draft after you have edited it. Make sure you have ever so carefully corrected all grammar and mechanical errors (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). As I read it, I will note any problem you missed that I catch. I will do that by putting a tick mark in the margin. (I)

When you get your paper back, it is your responsibility to:

1. Find the problem.
2. Correct it on the page in another color.
3. Use a resource, ask someone, or ask me (last) if you can't find the error.
4. Write about it in your Proofreader's Log.

You should also add to your Log after lessons in class, writing circles, or if parents, tutors, friends, or other teachers point out your convention errors.

In the future, AFTER revising your paper, BUT BEFORE turning it in, edit by checking your personal Proofreader's Log. Then, fix any errors you're reminded of by your notes.

Sample Proofreader's Log

The problem	The problem corrected	An explanation worded so that you will remember.
<i>Examples:</i> sp	Wrong: I rained to the store for my mom. Right: I ran...	Ran is spelled wrong. I think it was an editing error.
sp	Wrong: I have alot of work to do. Right: ...a lot...	A lot is not one word.
C	Wrong: We live in charlotte. Right: We live in Charlotte.	Cities need capital letters.
P	Wrong: We were best friends we never were apart. Right: We were best friends. We never were apart.	There are two sentences. There should be a period or a connecting word between the two sentences. A comma cannot take the place of a period.
usage	I can't find it anywheres.	Anywheres is never a word.
Verb tense	He use all the soap. He used all the soap.	Need past tense of the verb: Today, he uses. Yesterday, he used. Tomorrow, he will use.

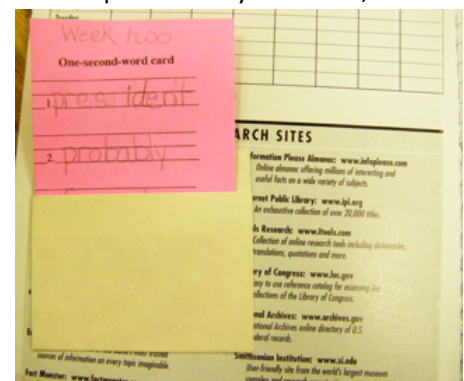
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One-Second Spelling Cards

I ask students, "Wouldn't you love to be able to spell those words that give you trouble ALL THE TIME correctly - in one second?" They nod vigorously. We list those words that we have to look up constantly: because, beautiful, definite, really... Then I tell them that they CAN know how to spell their personal tough words in a second. "Pick 5 words that give you trouble and write them correctly on these cards I have for you! Glue a library card into the front cover of your daybook and put the card right there. When you're writing and you can't remember, grab the card and...VOILA! In one second you will know how."

Groans. "Is that it?" they want to know.

Well, it works. The kids write the words that plague them the most on a card. If they will use the card, then every time they spell it, the letters of the word go through their brain channels correctly and eventually - pretty quickly, really - they learn the word. As soon as they learn a word or all 5, they get a new card and add more words. Works like a charm.



Sentence Combining for grammar sense

(Directions compiled from *stack the deck*, "Flip the Deck")

Do some exercises orally to get kids started. The students need to see how natural language is to help them understand how to combine ideas into complex sentences.

Oral Activity 1

Scrambled Sentence: Bought pink Perry Thursday on a poodle

Sentence: *Perry bought a pink poodle on Thursday.*

Scrambled Sentence: classmates candy your with share your chocolate

Sentence: *Share your chocolate candy with your classmates.*

Oral Activity 2

Sentences: There is a child.
The child is small.
There is a swimming pool.
The child jumped.

Combined Sentence:

The small child jumped into a swimming pool. OR
There is a small child who jumped into a swimming pool.



Look at the oral skills you used:

You **combined** four sentences into one.

You **rearranged** words - you probably put *small* before *child*.

You **subtracted** unnecessary words.

You **expanded**. You probably added *who* or *into*.

Directions: Combine the sentences into ONE complex sentence *without* changing the meaning. Use correct punctuation and grammar.

EXAMPLE:

It was snowing.

It was snowing very hard.

On Saturday, it snowed.

COMPLEX SENTENCE: *On Saturday, it snowed very hard.*

1. The beach was calm.
It was a sunny day.
The wind was blowing.
2. The princess loved the commoner.
The commoner was flat broke.
3. The man grew vegetables.
He sold them in the city.
He sold them everyday.
The vegetables were delicious.
4. The ball was hit.
Peter hit the ball.
The ball went into the outfield.
5. Fearless Fred dashed into the room.
He dived at the robber.
He missed.
He sailed out the five-story window.
6. All the students loved their teacher.
The students were cool.
Their teacher was brilliant.
7. They walked on.
They were looking at the stars.
They were talking about them.
The stars streaked across the sky.

Now, take a look at a piece of your writing.
Where could you combine sentences to make
your writing more powerful?

Sentence Expansion

I saw a dragon.

Add an adjective: *I saw a massive dragon.*

Add a comparison at the end: *I saw a dragon as tall as the Bank of America building.*

Add or improve an action verb: *A dragon as tall as the Bank of America building posed on the horizon.*

Add an adverb: *A dragon as tall as the Bank of America building posed majestically on the horizon.*



Directions: Expand these sentences:

1. The deer was on the highway.
2. The man was on the train.
3. The class was on a picnic.
4. The teacher gave a test.
5. The girls went down the road.
6. The taxi hit the bus.
7. My aunt got a chair to go with the couch.
8. Harold jumped.
9. The girl swam.
10. The night was dark.

Glue Words (from Stack the Deck)

Words that glue ideas together: after, because, since, unless, before, if, until, when

Example: Scott likes Wrinkles. He's a goofy pooch.

Use a glue word: Scott likes Wrinkles **because** he's a goofy pooch.

Example: Dawn doesn't go jogging.
She stretches out first.

Use a glue word: Dawn doesn't go jogging **unless** she stretches out first.

<i>after</i>	<i>unless</i>	<i>until</i>	<i>and</i>
<i>because</i>	<i>before</i>	<i>when</i>	<i>but</i>
<i>since</i>	<i>if</i>	<i>so</i>	

Use a glue word to combine the two sentences into one:

1. I was upset.
I couldn't concentrate.
2. The birthday party will start.
The people get here.
3. We will go to Disney World.
I can save the money.
4. The grass is very dry and brittle.
There has been very little rain.
5. We will not go to special classes.
We have to take a long test.
6. I would have gone to school.
It snowed so hard.
7. You have to learn how to ride a bike.
You can compete in a bike race.
8. We will go trick or treating.
The sun goes down.

Look at the writing you have done. Find some sentences you can glue together with glue words! Try it!

Wiping Out Sentence Fragments (compiled from “Flip the Deck,” from www.stackthedeck.com)

Every time you want to see if a group of words is a fragment, pull out your card, “I believe that . . .” Read the words **I believe that** in front of the words you are checking. If the ideas make sense, it is a sentence. If the words sound confusing, it is probably a fragment.

Example: After the game ended.
I believe that after the game ended.
Doesn’t make sense. This phrase is a fragment, not a sentence.

Example: We cheered after the game ended.
I believe that we cheered after the game ended.
Sounds OK. This group of words is a sentence.

In my experience, however, the ability to recognize the category of these connectors is all that is needed: not the technical grammatical terminology, and not the ability to analyze grammar structures in detail. ---Constance Weaver

I believe that...

I believe that...

I believe that...

I believe that...

I believe that...

I believe that...

TIME WARP:

What's a story without action verbs? Here's an activity called **Time Warp** from NC DPI's *Grammar Adventure*.

1. Ask the students to brainstorm events in their lives that took place or will take place and write their suggestions in the correct column of the "collection of events" overhead. (See next page) **Be sure to write the events as nouns or noun phrases --- do not use verbs at this point.**

Collection of **Events** overhead

Past	Present	Future
soccer game	art for special class	trip this summer.
rain	writing lessons	Halloween
		winter vacation

2. Ask students to write complete sentences to go with the events the class brainstormed. **Model what you want students to do.** Here are some examples you might use:

- Over the weekend we watched a soccer game.
- Today we will go to the football game together.
- We will take a trip this summer.
- We are practicing writing right now!
- It rained eight inches a month ago months ago!



3. Give students the choice to work alone, in pairs or in triads to **generate sentences to go with the events.** You will have enough sentences for the next part of the exercise if everyone writes for 5-10 minutes.
4. **Ask the students to tell you their sentences.**
5. As the students read their sentences to the teacher, **the teacher collects the verbs** the students used in the correct column.

Collection of **Verbs** overhead

Past	Present	Future
watched	are practicing	will go
rained		will take

6. Ask student to figure out patterns together by looking at the collection chart the teacher made.
 - For example, Past verbs end with *-ed*. Future tenses use "will," etc.
 - Past – watched Present – have Future – will take
 - Present tense verbs are the hardest verbs to use in writing because things rarely happen right now.
 - **Writing should be in the same tense. Writers shouldn't switch back and forth.**
7. For individual practice...
 - Ask the students to find the verbs on a page from the novel they are reading. (Or use a picture book.) Have them record the verbs from the story onto the past-present-future chart. Check together in reading groups. Do the authors use action or passive verbs?
 - Ask the students to take a story they have written and make sure all the verbs are in the same tense.