

*If I don't practice the way I should, then I won't play the way I know I can. - Ivan Lendl*

During the summer, we love to kayak on the lake. The early morning water, the birds, the blue sky—everything combines to create a truly lovely experience. A few mornings ago I was happily paddling with my husband, mentally complimenting myself on how much I had improved. How surprised I was when he kindly suggested, "Try raising your left elbow when you paddle. I think you'll find it easier." After giving me time to practice (and noting my improvement), we finished our morning paddle.

Since then, I have been reflecting on the concept of practice. The concept of practice can be overlooked due to the high demands of covering all state standards. Too often, we ask our students to complete a **writing product** before we have given them time to practice and master the necessary skills within the **writing process**. How can we effectively provide practice and feedback to our students within an already busy day?

Many teachers use rotations/centers during their literacy block. Only writing that has been previously taught and practiced with a teacher should be put in an independent writing rotation. Writing rotations should be for the purpose of practicing a skill/concept with which students are already familiar. The same way you would not expect students to learn a new math skill independently, you cannot expect students to learn new writing skills independently.

#### Primary Students

You have taught the **5 Requirements of a Sentence** and want your students to practice this skill. First, ask yourself, "Are my students ready to practice the parts of a sentence independently?" In order to focus on the subject of a sentence, provide students with different pictures which become the subjects of their sentence writing. Students will take that picture and write a sentence using the picture as the subject. **For example:** The picture is a girl in a bathing suit. Students might write: *The girl is at the beach. The little girl can't wait to go swimming.* You are now able to clearly assess if your students understand the definition and purpose of a subject in a sentence. Feedback is efficient and precise. Continue adding additional components of a sentence once students have shown mastery of the previous component.

#### Intermediate Students

As stated above, students require practice in the writing process prior to creating a writing product. Intermediate students are often asked to write to specific topics in a specific format. Identifying topics and formats is a skill that students can practice and refine using various texts. Provide students with many different examples of formats and topics to view. **For example:** newspaper advertisements, websites, posters, non-fiction books, brochures, poems, maps, whatever you can locate. Number the examples of texts. In a small group or center, students will create a two column chart. Title the chart's left side **Format** and the right side **Topic**. Students will number their chart to match the text examples. Students will identify the format and topic of each text example. **For example: Topic = refrigerators, Format = Advertisement** When students have mastered identifying topics and formats in a written text, they are ready to identify topics and formats asked for in a written prompt.

Other ideas can be found in the *Write Now—Right Now Writing Program*.

Visit: [www.writenow-rightnow.com](http://www.writenow-rightnow.com) for more information.