

*"You're off to great places, today is your day. Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way." - Dr. Seuss*

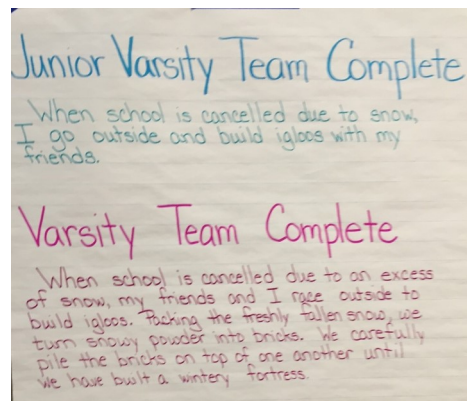
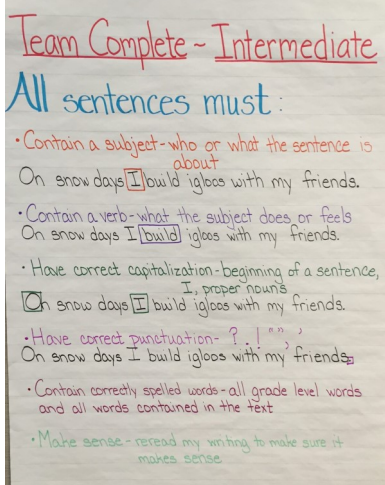
And we're off! Whether it is your 1st or 30th year teaching, there is something exciting about the first day of school. Sharpened pencils, never touched crayons and empty spirals all represent limitless possibilities. New faces nervously greet you at the door, some excited about learning, some nervous about making friends, and some worried that they will not be successful. The first days are filled with building classroom communities and practicing routines. It's time to get on our way!

### Building on the Basics

Everyone who has ever purchased a home knows that the most significant component - more important than color, size, or even location - is the foundation! A cracked or damaged foundation foretells future problems. The foundation of writing is the sentence. In an effort to begin writing paragraphs, we often skip this important step. Although this learning crack may not appear at first, a student's inability to identify and write a complete sentence will impact their writing in all subject areas. Some practice ideas on sentence writing:

**Team Complete** – Students are invited to try out for *Team Complete*, but the qualifications are a secret. Through either verbal or written responses, students soon realize that in order to join Team Complete, they must respond in a complete sentence. For example: *Teacher: What's your favorite color? Student: Blue. Teacher: I'm so sorry but you didn't make Team Complete. Try out again. Another Student: My favorite color is pink. Teacher: Hooray, you are now on Team Complete!*

As students become proficient at speaking and writing in complete sentences, it's time to move on to *Junior Varsity* and *Varsity Team Complete Sentences*. How can we encourage our students to compose more detailed and interesting sentences? The analogy of *Varsity Team Complete* may just do the trick.



To view additional lesson samples in sentence writing, visit: <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5609f7afe4b02872f51f680b/t/562ff360e4b05cda5f7a8d8f/1445983072595/Second+Grade+Writing+Program+Sample.pdf>

Building on the Basics , cont. . . .

### Pick a Subject

Review with students that the subject of a sentence is always a noun. (This can be a great lesson in itself, as students discover that not all nouns are subjects, but all subjects must be a noun.) Each student writes a subject at the top of a piece of paper. Underneath the chosen word the students will write a sentence using that word as the subject. Leaving their paper on their desks, give students 15 seconds to move to a new spot. They will write a sentence at their new spot, using the subject the original student has chosen. Repeat this five times. After students return to their own seat, they can read the sentences their classmates wrote using their subject and they may then choose the most interesting sentence. Students will edit that sentence and turn it in to you. You now have a writing assessment that was engaging and interactive for students and you're only grading one sentence per student!

### Book Nook

*The War That Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

This is a story that will touch the hearts of many of your older readers. Set during World War II, Ada is a young girl born with a club foot. Her mother, a character who is fairy-tale evil, is ashamed of her and never allows her out of their small apartment.

Ada sees her chance to escape when children are removed from London to escape possible Nazi bombings. Evacuated to the country, Ada and her brother are taken in by Susan, a single woman dealing with her own sorrow. The book is a story of growth, strength and relationships. The character development in the novel will lead to deep classroom discussions. [https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00KWG65L0/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?\\_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1#nav-subnav](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00KWG65L0/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1#nav-subnav)



! exclamation mark by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01G5NWXSE/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?\\_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1#nav-subnav](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01G5NWXSE/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1#nav-subnav)

Using punctuation marks as characters, this whimsical picture book explores the theme of embracing each person's unique characteristics. As "!" looks for a place to belong he learns the value of being unique. Adults will especially enjoy meeting "?". Both young and old readers will enjoy reading how "!" discovers his strengths.

### Advice to A Newbie (and us Oldies, too)



All of us can remember our first year teaching (and some of us are experiencing that first year right now!) The to-do list seemed never ending and the word "overwhelmed" became the answer to "How are you?" When meeting with teachers to discuss writing, we use the acronym **SOAP** to help them focus their lessons, remember the essentials of writing instruction and enjoy their time with students.

**S** = Go **Slow**. Whether it be practicing routines or learning new skills, give yourself and your students the gift of slowing the pace. It is better to do something well and often, than to race through lessons which leave students confused and teachers frustrated.

**O** = Follow an Instructional **Order**. Bombarded by activity ideas, we may become tempted to jump from lesson to lesson. Remind yourself that students crave order, in both the classroom and in instruction.

**A** = Find an **Accountability** friend. Meet together to talk about successes, ideas, and ways to improve. Whether it be to vent or look for ideas to improve rotations, an accountability friend is essential.

**P** = Provide time for **Practice**. Any new skill, from kayaking to quilting to writing, requires practice. Provide your students the time they need to practice their new skills. <http://www.writenow-rightnow.com/blog/2015/we-live-in-a-web-of-ideas-a-fabric-of-our-own-making-joseph-chilton-pearce>

The following link is an article from Educational Leadership titled Tell Me About . . . Advice You'd Offer A New Teacher! Whether you're mentoring a new teacher or are embarking on your first year, you'll find the advice helpful and timely!

[http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational\\_leadership/may16/vol73/num08/Advice\\_You'd\\_Offer\\_a\\_First-Year\\_Teacher.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/may16/vol73/num08/Advice_You'd_Offer_a_First-Year_Teacher.aspx)

## Poetry

Poetry can easily become part of your writing instruction. Here are two lesson ideas for the beginning of the school year.

"A Moment in Summer" by Charlotte Zolotow (taken from *The Sky is Full of Song* poems collected by L. Hopkins)

This simple poem describes a moment between the author and a honeybee. After reading the poem aloud, students are asked to choose one moment of their summer. This is a good time to define the term *moment* and begin to talk about focus in our writing. A trip to the amusement park is not a moment, however the arrival at the top of the rollercoaster when your heart stops as you look at the plunge is a moment. Provide students a quarter sheet of paper to draw their special moment from summer. After completing their drawing, they will write a sentence or two about their special summer moment.

*A Moment in Summer*

*A moment in summer*

*belongs to me*

*And one particular*

*Honeybee.*

*A moment in summer*

*Shimmering clear*

*Making the sky*

*Seem very near,*

*A moment in summer*

*Belongs to me.*

"In My Backyard" by Susan Taylor Brown

<http://gottabook.blogspot.com/2012/04/susan-taylor-brown-in-my-backyard.html>

This poem shares a similar topic of a moment in summer. Along with beautiful language, this poem provides a way to review nouns and adjectives. After reading the poem 2 or 3 times as a class, students underline every noun in the poem. The author provides words to further describe these nouns. These words are called adjectives. Highlight all the adjectives found in this poem. Once students have completed highlighting the words, ask the following questions.

What do you notice about these words?

How has the use of adjectives added to the picture the poem paints for the reader?

## Sixth Grade Has Arrived!

We are excited to announce that *Write Now—Right Now* is now available for 6th grade! The program contains *The Main Writing Program* and *Writing In Response to Reading* based on 6th grade writing standards.

As always, please contact us if we can be of service in any way. Email us at: [darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com](mailto:darlene-and-terry@writenow-rightnow.com)

Additional ideas and activities can be found in the *Write Now - Right Now Writing Program*.

To view grade level samples, locate additional newsletters and read blog posts, visit:

<http://www.writenow-rightnow.com/>