Write a Complete Sentence

1. Focus (15 MINUTES)

Display page 8 of the mentor big book using the big book or interactive whiteboard resources. Discuss the picture with students and read the entry together.

Say: We learned that people often use the word I in their journals to tell about things they do. But we can use other people’s names, too. Marta writes, “Today Jill fell and hurt her knee.” Marta tells about Jill in this sentence. The word Jill tells “who” the sentence is about, and the words fell and hurt tell what Jill did—she fell and hurt her knee. This sentence is a complete thought because it tells “who” and then tells what happens. Now I’m going to think of someone I know and something that person did.

Model how to close your eyes and visualize what to write about. Then use the think-aloud below as an example of how to describe a journal idea.

Say: My friend Nate made a vase out of clay. He won first prize at an art show! I will draw a picture of Nate with his vase and the prize he won. He will have a big smile!

Model drawing the scene on chart paper. Remind students that journal drawings don’t have to be detailed and that their purpose is to show what we visualize. Then tell students what you want to write and model writing it.

Say: I want to add a sentence to this journal entry. I could write “Won first prize.” No! That’s not a complete thought. It doesn’t tell who won the prize. I could write “Nate first prize.” No! That’s not a complete thought, either. It doesn’t tell what Nate did. I know! I’ll write “Nate won first prize.” As you write, model the following:

- Emphasize the concepts about print that students need to practice based on your daily informal observations and notes. (See list in Objectives.)
- Tell how you remember high-frequency words.
- Model how to say the words in your sentence slowly and use letter/sound relationships to help you write them. Depending on the message and the phonics skills you’ve taught, this discussion might include consonants, short vowels, long vowels (final e and common vowel teams), common consonant blends and digraphs, regular plurals (-s and -es endings), and common inflectional endings such as -ed and -ing. For words with irregular or higher-level spelling patterns, say: Remember that if you don’t know how to spell a word, you can just write the sounds you hear.
- Model rereading after each word by pointing to the words you’ve written so far and then pointing to where the next word should go. Say: We’re ready for the word _______. Then discuss and write the word.
Ask students to reread the journal entry with you to check it. Then say: I used a complete thought. The word Nate tells “who” the sentence is about. The word won tells what happened.

2. Rehearse (5 MINUTES)
Invite students to close their eyes and visualize a person and event to draw and write about in a journal. Say: Tell your partner “who” you visualize and what that person is doing. Say a complete thought. Start with the person’s name. Then tell what the person did.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring (20 MINUTES)
Distribute students’ writing journals. Invite each student to draw a picture of the idea he or she visualized and to write a message. Validate the decision of any student who chooses to draw and write about something else. Support and encourage students in any attempts to record the sounds they hear in words and to write high-frequency words. Remind students that each sentence should be a complete thought, telling whom or what the sentence is about and what happens.

Use the Sample Responsive Conferring Prompts to help you provide differentiated support to individual students based on your observations.

4. Share (5 MINUTES)
Use the Share time in one of the following ways depending on your observations of students during Independent Writing and Conferring:

- Invite volunteers who have written their journal entries to share them with the class. Ask them to read aloud their entries and then point to the uppercase letters and end punctuation they used.
- As volunteers read aloud their journal entries, ask other students to listen to see whether the writers have used complete sentences. Copy one or two student sentences on chart paper and ask volunteers to point to the “who” and the “what” in each sentence. Ask them to point to the action in the sentence. If the sentence is not a complete thought, ask students to help make it complete.
- Ask several students to share what words they found difficult and the strategies they used to write them.

Sample Responsive Conferring Prompts to Support and Scaffold Writers

Goal Oriented
- I visualize what happened. Then I draw and write about it.
- I will say the word ______ and listen for the first sound I hear.

Directive and Corrective Feedback
- Think about someone you know and something that person did. Tell me your memory.
- How will you start your sentence?
- What do you need to put at the end of your sentence?

Self-Monitoring and Reflection
- How did visualizing help you decide what to write?
- What did you do to help you write difficult words?
- What did you see in your mind as you got ready to draw and write?
- How can you tell if you wrote a complete sentence?

Validating and Confirming
- Your picture really shows the memory you described in words!
- You heard the ______ sound and wrote the letter!
- I notice that you put spaces between your words. That’s an important part of writing.
- You wrote a complete thought. You told “who” your sentence was about and you told what happened.

Teacher Tip
Monitor students’ attempts to put spaces between words. For students who struggle with this concept, demonstrate how to place your finger on the paper after a word and leave it there as you start the next word on the other side of your finger. Then encourage students to create their own “finger spaces” as they write their messages.