

Teaching Suggestions: Sentences

- Begin with where students are. If they are at 2-3 word sentences, start there and have students imitate them. *(For instance, you provide a sentence and ask them to imitate "I'm tired" imitations—I'm hungry. I'm sad. I'm happy. From there, ask what words could be added to extend the sentences. I'm really tired. I'm really tired because I stayed up too late last night.*

Model answering 'why' with your sentence and ask children to do the same. Answering why helps students write in complete sentences. For instance, "Would you rather have a cat or a dog?" "A dog." Why? I would rather have a dog because I think they are more fun than cats.

- Help students use enhanced word choices. Prompt them with suggestions, what other word could you use instead of fun? happy? excited? content? etc.
- Model good sentences orally. Have children practice stretching the sentences orally. For example: how can we make this sentence more interesting "I'm having a good day". *(Can good be replaced with a stronger feeling word? Can we add why the day is a good day?)*
- When modeling sentences, write them out and take a minute to ask about spelling conventions, grammar, punctuation and capital letters. Use an integrated approach.
- Have students find sentences in books or available print. Ask what makes the sentence a good one or how it can be improved.
- DO NOT have students copy sentences with errors. Many students will think they are correct especially when they are not sure of what some of the errors might be. It is however, acceptable to have students fix errors in sentences.
- Review choppy and run on sentences with students. Provide examples and ask students what makes them choppy or run on and how they can be improved.
- The goal of supporting students with sentences is to support them to write increasingly complex sentences.
- Other skills to include in a timely manner when working on sentences include: *parts of speech, punctuation, irregular word spellings, synonyms, spelling conventions, syllables, definitions, word choice.*
- Before asking students to stretch the sentence, model a few on the board first. For example:
Sentence: The squirrel leaped.
Add adjectives and adverbs: The wild squirrel leaped quickly.
Add prepositional phrases: At the park, the wild squirrel leaped quickly from branch to branch.
- Research has proven that sentence stretching/expanding, sentence imitation and working with poetry helps support grammar and sentence construction/understanding.
- Bell work could include a daily sentence with a focus on one or more of: Imitating, stretching the sentence, vocabulary, parts of speech and grammar and punctuation.
- Sentence writing is great as a daily bell work activity, it is also something that works well as part of balanced literacy groups.