

**TEACHER TO TEACHER – 2005**  
**Mike Barney – Writing Across Content Areas**

**Segment 1 – Importance of Writing**

MB: My name is Mike Barney. I'm from Riverside County of Office of Education. And this session here is writing in the content area. The focus that we're going to make in this presentation is the issue that when we write in the content area it's not doing the big research report, it's not doing the writing, um, it's not doing the long pieces, it's really getting your kids to write every day in your content class, whatever that content class, from P.E. all the way to the typical ones that we think about in science and in social studies or in history.

So the first thing that we want to do is there is an activity on your table, there's little cards. Some of you have already started to read them. But go ahead and read those cards and the question you want to ask is did the students get the content? So yes or no. Did they get the content?

FS: No.

MB: No, they didn't. And even though a lot of you are not necessarily the content teacher or your expertise is not the area that you just read, you quickly knew right away there's something wrong here, because the students had to provide their answer through writing.

And writing tells it all. It makes everybody think through the process. And they can't do anything else but write. Is there one that somebody wants to read that's particularly humorous for you? Okay, who's going to read? Are you guys going to take care of lower Egypt? Go ahead. Linda, thank you.

FS: There was upper Egypt and lower Egypt. Lower Egypt was actually farther up than upper Egypt, which was of course lower down than the upper part. (Laughter)

MB: That's called filing the page. Who's got the math one, the over 100 percent death?

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FS: Death rates exceeded 100 percent in some towns.

MB: We call that town a strong born again. (Laughter)

MB: Actually all these cards came out of this book and it's just wonderful "Non Campus Mentis". It's actually college level students wrote those, if that is... believe it or not, believe it or not. So our focus is getting kids to be able to write their ideas down quickly and most importantly support them, not through upper and lower Egypt support but more concrete support that provides evidence and example for your argument.

The other thing we have to do is we constantly have to be thinking of the issue is what drives my instruction. And that's really the essence of why we probably need kids to be writing every day and minimally once a week, because ultimately when you're done with your class period you have to make a decision about what are you going to teach tomorrow. And that decision shouldn't be based on the curriculum it should be based on evidence that your kids are providing daily. And that's really what writing does for you.

So the issue is what am I going to teach tomorrow? How can you figure out what are you going to teach tomorrow? Of course, you can do the typical quiz, but more importantly you could simply have them take notes and you could wander the room and check their notes and make sure that they're getting the big ideas that you want to give to them. You can ask them to answer a short answer quiz at the end. And the one that we're going to talk about today is this last one, ask them really to ... actually we're going to talk about two of them. We're going to talk about this one and this one. But we're going to ask students then to summarize the big ideas that have been taught that day.

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So the issue is that we know that if kids want to understand text, that text comprehension is enhanced when readers actively relate the ideas represented in print to their own knowledge and experience and construct mental representations in memory. That's key. Giving kids an opportunity to think about what you're teaching them. And that's what we're talking about here.

And we're going... the mental representation we're going to use is a note taking device and then the other one is just paragraph writing, because ultimately like we talked about at the beginning is if kids are writing that's all they can do, they cannot think about anything else when they're writing. You have to focus. And that's what writing does it will get your kids then to focus that information.

Why are we even doing this? Who cares? Why is writing so important for our kids? Because one-third of our high school students are proficient writers, only one-third, 33 percent are only proficient. Simply the answer is they simply have to write more. I would argue not just write more they actually have to be taught how to organize. Just like we teach kids basic sentence construction, we have to teach students basic paragraph construction.

Once they understand basic paragraph construction then it's that English teacher that can really turn them on to all the wonderful things that you can do as a writer by showing people what you're thinking versus telling people, using some great analogies, some similes, some metaphors and just really kind of making writing more of a fun experience. And then the other one, the other reason is we have to look at studies like 90/90 studies that Donald Reeves looks at, the 90/90 schools that Donald Reeves has looked at.

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And the 90/90 schools are simply 90 percent minority, 90 percent are free and reduced and 90 percent of the students are 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on a standardized test instrument. Fifty percentile above. Now we all know that 50 percentile is the key number, it means the kid is at grade level. So if they can perform at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in a standardized measurement then they are at grade level. And at these 90/90 schools that we would typically would think they would be failing schools, 90 percent of their students are proficient or above.

And the key things on those studies... There's a whole list, a laundry list of what these schools do, but the most important piece that you want to look at is you really want to look at what are they doing in writing, they ask their kids in every class for simple short assignments. So kids are constantly having to think about the content that was just given to them, constantly having to think about the content that was just given to them.

And I like his quote because I think a lot of us are always looking for the magic key. And I think the magic key is actually one of the skills that we all come to education with. It's not something that we have to buy a new program with, spend more money. It's simply giving them an opportunity to write. So it's simply that brief task of writing.

The first thing that we're going to do, now the cards come in and the back table where Shannon is have already read the cards. So if you look at the cards. Also in your packet on page 13 you will see this handout. So let me just get a handout for you. This is the handout that is on page 13. We're going to read this top part. And that top part then looks like this. This is my content that I'm going to provide for you. This is my content. So...

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But before we do that, before I give you the content what is the pattern that I'm going to use throughout my school year to make sure writing is always brought into my curriculum. What I'm going to constantly do is one and two we naturally always do as content teachers. But three, four and five then is what I'm going to implement to get more writing in my class.

Number three I'm going to teach the content. However you teach it, through science experiments, through reading of textbooks, through reading of web, through reading of articles, through discussion, through cooperative learning, however the kids are getting your content. They're going to be given the content and take notes at that time. And then you of course monitor the note taking. And then finally the last step is quickly summarize the main ideas.

And number five is key because that's our goal. Our goal is to get kids to be able to write between a six to eleven sentence paragraph in simply five minutes. And, of course, if you are asking kids to write that quickly then you're asking for a rough draft. And the key thing about this paragraph when you have them do it in five minutes the main thing is it will be well organized. It will be well organized.

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**Segment 2 – Taking Notes**

MB: Before we get back to our content, teaching the content, the first thing we have to do then is go ahead and get some notes. So as you're copying that down if you could also start grabbing a plain piece of paper. In your packet you're going to go ahead and see this black line. Black lines are good. I always found they worked well when I first instruct on something because the process can be faster. So if we're just teaching them how to take notes and they don't understand the process of taking notes, then using a black line is key.

But ultimately I want Johnny to go home and be able to do it independently. Now my daughter who is in middle school one of the things that she gets a lot of is she gets study guides to go with her chapters, certainly in her science class. But my feeling is does my daughter know how to read the textbook without the study guide? And so that's why I tend to use a lot of paper, line paper, through the process just so that I know Johnny can do it at home.

So go ahead and take it, it's a side to side, fold, grab each side and go ahead and fold it down the middle. And then unfold it. And usually you have holes on your paper. Take the hole side and drag it over to the middle. So you're going to divide one of the columns in half. So it's going to look something like that. And then take your pencil and go ahead and start, we'll have you start drawing some lines.

So the first line you need to draw is at the very top, go ahead, just straight across. And then draw a line down each crease that you just formed. This is actually based on two ideas. One Maureen Almond which I reference the source, the reference is inside your handout, I'll reference that when I get to that slide. And then the other one is just using Cornell Notes. How many people are familiar with Cornell Notes?

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So the idea that a professor needed to figure, to help kids to be able to take notes because he found that they as they came into college they couldn't take notes and so he taught them this technique which he called Cornell Notes. So the first part is going to be the main idea or what I call just MI. The second part or the second column is the question. This is... you might put the word student there. This is student generated. This is not you generating questions. This is the key thing, if you look at any of the comprehension research, that students that can generate questions about their content being taught will tend to remember the content better than students that are just given questions.

And then the last one is you could go ahead and write the notes, it's your actual notes, but if you want to be a little bit more particular it's actually the examples. So it might be pictures. I've got a math example that I'll show you. It could be the evidence that proves this idea. Or it could be you might need to explain that idea. Now as we look at our text what we find then is students have to, the first thing a teacher has to do is preview the text with the kids because most students don't necessarily, aren't as in love with the material or the content as you are as the content teacher. And so you ooze out your content as you walk around. And some of our kids don't ooze out that same content. They ooze out different content.

And a classic one is a quote from a great book that I just love the title. It's actually written by high school students and then commentary by a teacher. It's called "Fires in the Bathroom, Advice for Teachers from High School Students". So it's just a great title. I mean, it makes you want to read it. I'll pass this one around too for you. And there... so it's just quotes from kids, high school kids and then a commentary, a teacher commentary.

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So one of the first quotes that I came across, certainly a kid's content comprehension and writing issues is this first one up here: especially with hard subjects, it's difficult to figure out what they're trying to teach if you don't know it yet. Keep in mind your kids might not know it yet. Okay? They might not have ever been introduced to the idea. And so that's key. They have to be introduced to the idea before you can actually teach it. And then the bottom one is just a short and sweet one: don't think students just get it after the first time.

And so we're going to talk... we're going to read it only once, but when we write it we're going to go back again to it. And when we want to add more notes to our note sheet we're going to go back again, so constantly giving kids a different purpose to be able to attack text. So let's come back then to our text here.

So before we get started, the first thing we have to do is tell you the topic. What's our topic of this article? It's going to be text comprehension is actually the key thing. And what we're going to do is we're going to find out that the key thing is that, it's how do kids, in this case, how do good readers... what do good readers do? Okay? So our first one, our topic, and I just simply, you can put T equals or topic equals. We're just going to go ahead and write good readers. That's our topic.

So this is an article about good readers. Now that topic sentence good readers are both purposeful and active gave us our big ideas didn't it? What are the two big ideas that they gave us? Purposeful and active. So as you read both of these paragraphs, as I explained to the students, as you read both of these paragraphs the first paragraph is going to focus on what? How did you know it was purposeful? First, okay.

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So I'm going to do some overt telling of how I'm figuring out how I'm reading this paragraph, okay, how I'm reading it. Because ultimately what are students doing when they read content text? Now this content text is very overt in telling me exactly what I need to be reading for. Some is more covert and you've got to teach them the issue of your textbook. And the good thing is if your textbook is hard to understand in the first chapter or first theme or first unit it's usually hard to understand throughout.

But there's a pattern that your textbook company uses. Teaching your kids that pattern to decipher that difficult text is key. It's key. Because they won't come to it knowing it, because again they don't know the content as strong as you do. And what's our second paragraph going to be about? Active. And again the first sentence gives this. So that's how I found my two big ideas, my two big ideas. Now what I want you to do is I want you to go ahead and read those two paragraphs and I want you to give me, I want you to explain what do they mean by purposeful and on the other one I want you to give me an example, what do you mean by purposeful? So okay if the reader is purposeful give me an example. And for an active reader I want you to do the same thing. Explain it and give me an example.

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**Segment 3 – Purposeful Reading**

MB: Here's an article that was read in a middle school class, Wilson Middle School in Indio, California. What the teacher did then is they read this together and took notes and then each group of two to four students then read a paragraph. And so they spent five minutes here, and they spent five minutes doing this, and then they spent another five minutes filling in everyone's note sheet and talking about the articles as a complete piece.

And so their note sheet then looks like this, and this was just a beginning process. So it's the same idea. So as we talk about individual work keep in mind that you can start numbering off paragraphs and do then a group share because I think the biggest problem that we have as teachers is just time. How do I get through my content in a quick enough fashion, but also create that social discussion about the content that I want to teach.

So it's that issue then. That gives them an opportunity because they are not just reading a whole article, they're only reading a piece and then their friends are going to help them put it together. It's kind of the jigsaw with note taking. Kids have to learn to take notes and read the content. But it could start earlier. It could start in third grade, could start in second grade, even could start in first grade except the teacher might be doing all the note taking as a whole group activity. So it would look a little different of course in high school.

But it truly is a life skill, the idea of note taking. So what is ... explain purposeful. What does purposeful mean? Somebody?

FS: To have a good reason for what you're doing, for why you read.

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MB: A reason to read. So good readers tend to understand why. Now my question to you is, Mary, by giving them purposeful and active did that give my students enough purpose? And I'm not even going to ask you to answer that. But that's something that I have to think about as a teacher because is that enough purpose to move my kids to start understanding the content, understanding the content. And then an example of purposeful.

FS: How to do something, like to use a food processor.

MB: So I'm going to put ex to make an example, how to do something. Oh, how to use something.

FS: Like the article said, how to use a food processor, how to use a VCR.

MB: Oh, fantastic.

FS: And also for gathering information, like reading a guidebook.

MB: Oh, okay. So then I can add, if I wanted to, did you then add another line here and put gathering information?

FS: I put those kind of with examples.

MB: You did? You still continued ... you just made several examples. So keep in mind when I do any type of ... that's what's so good about writing too. My kid that's struggling might only write six sentences and my kid that's in my AP class or my GAT class might write then a whole page with multiple paragraphs, a paragraph for each big idea. So that's what's nice about writing, they can expand it quite easily, and the same with the note taking.

My minimal requirement was two things, but as you can see Mary, then my AP students just decided to extend it. Okay. And I can give points to that if I choose to

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motivate other students that maybe are not apt to pull that off on their own. What about active? Somebody else.

FS: Their experiences fit in, in terms of active readers. But they are required to think and resolve problems.

MB: Okay, so an active reader is required to think, okay, is required to think. And you want to give me an explanation, or an example of that?

FS: An example of that would be in their use of reading strategies when they come across a word that they don't know, or they come across a concept that's more than one piece, where they have to connect two pieces.

MB: Okay, so connecting ideas would be the example? Example, connect ideas. Now I want you to put this note sheet to the side then. I want you to put this note sheet to the side, but don't put it away because we're going to come back and use that as our information to write our summary. I just want to show you a math example that's going to ... we're going to do this second part, but let me show you here's the math example for you. So this is taking notes of course in math.

You better be drawing it too to understand it. So they're drawing all the information. It looks like they were looking at classifying different quadrilaterals. So there they are. And they are giving even some equations and some more information. They're labeling their pictures as you can see. So they're giving as much information as they can. So note taking isn't just words, of course, it can be drawings or anything. Whatever helps Johnny out.

And then finally it's taking these ideas and putting them down in a paragraph form. And this teacher then asks for some examples at the bottom. Is it simple? Yes. Is it straightforward? But do they understand the objective which is the ability to

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classify quadrilaterals? Have they gone through that information more than once?

And I would say they've gone through it of course, first, through lecture and through activities in a math class, second through note taking and then third, through actual writing.

Let's go ahead and kind of look at why are we even doing some of this stuff. This is... and I have already reiterated so just so you know this is our session goals of course as we're going through. But the reason that I put this slide up, even though we've gone through the goals, is really this quote. This quote just means, this is it, this is why teachers have to have their kids write, even if it's short paragraphs, because the key word is really the Rs, it's the residue that's left, it's the content, it's making Johnny read rethink through the content that has already been taught.

Because remember anybody can fill in multiple choice, bubble-in, 90/90 type test, because they can do a pattern. But they can't necessarily write on a topic if they don't understand that topic. The other one, it serves as a tool for reflection. And then the last one, if they don't get it, it gives them an opportunity to revise.

We also always want to consider what makes a student a good comprehender of text. The first two are strong K-1 and K-2, maybe K-3 for phonics as you get more difficult kind of skills in there. But really fluency is more elementary in middle school, focusing on that. But the last two are really K-life, building your vocabulary, even as an adult learner I want to build my vocabulary, and, of course, I want to understand everything I read. So even though some of these things are K-2 or K-3 we really only consider those last two at the secondary level.

And then why even do writing? Well, if you look at the biology teacher, which is a journal for biology teachers at the secondary level, the issue is that they found a

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significant improvement was caused simply by integrating writing. We had a science teacher talk about how he makes them do an experiment and then, they've already read the chapter, they've done the experiment, and now he has them compare the two ideas and do kind of a compare and contrast of the ideas. Did you find out the same thing that the author talked about? Yeah, you have a comment?

FS: I teach biology. And we do a good bit of different types of writing. Not only formal lab notes but we do, I have them write stories where they pretend to be some organ or something and they have to describe what's happening as the food goes through that organ or whatever. And I have found a definite correlation between student comprehension once they've written something.

MB: Because it forces them then to think... certainly in that narrative sense it forces them to really think about what that organ does and apply that in a narrative tone. That's interesting. I never thought of doing it that way. That's great.

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**Segment 4 – What Is A Paragraph?**

MB: So what is a paragraph? They all say what? Five to seven sentences. Yeah. And then I ask well, no, what is a paragraph? And they say I don't know ... and they give you that look. And so I say is this well, is this a paragraph? And I proceed to give them a very simple five sentences. I like McDonalds, I like whatever their fast food is around the area. And I give them five sentences like that. I like Taco Bell. I like Pizza Hut. I like... and so on. And I say is that a paragraph. Surprising or not they say no.

So they clearly have a sense of what is and what is not a paragraph. What they don't know is they don't know the elements of a paragraph. Because really a paragraph can be how many sentences? Three. A topic sentence, a detail about that topic and then a conclusion, right, three sentences is a paragraph. Of course, at the high school level that becomes not acceptable. I guess if it's a persuasive essay and you don't want them to support their argument very well, then you want short paragraphs. But usually you want them to support it and beef it up. And even at the middle school level...

But the issue is then, our issue is it really is just simply these three elements. That's all it is. That's all it is. And, of course, what we're trying to get our kids to do, because we're giving them usually the big idea, what they need to do is support it. What do you mean by purposeful? I've already told you it's purposeful. So telling me good readers are purposeful is not enough. I need this part is the important piece. This is my content that I want them to understand.

So what does a typical paragraph look like? It looks something like this. Simply a topic sentence, a detail, explain it a couple of times, another major detail, explain

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that a couple of times, another major detail, explain that a couple of times and then wrap it all with a conclusion. Okay, basic. Now that one happens to be one, nine and two, so an eleven sentence paragraph. But can a paragraph look something like this? Topic sentence, a detail, support it, then ... I'm just going to put lines here ... support it with two sentences, give another detail, support it with two sentences and a conclusion.

Is that acceptable? Yeah. Could I do a paragraph that looks something like this?

Topic sentence, a detail, support it once, detail, support it once, and a conclusion?

Yeah. This is clearly only six sentences, this might be my two minute paragraph that I demand from my students, the bell I know is about to ring, quickly jot out, I want a six sentence paragraph, make sure you support each of the major ideas with at least one supporting sentence. Go. Okay. And your ticket out the door is that paragraph. When you're done, hand it to me and you can go to your next class. Okay? So my purpose changes depending on... depending on what I want to do. My length changes depending on what I want them to do. So that's the key. It's not a formula. A formula, if there is a formula, I need a topic sentence in a paragraph, I need some supporting, I need some major details and I need to support those details and I need a conclusion.

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**Segment 5 – Topic Sentences**

MB: So I'll briefly talk about a topic sentence with you right now. And then we'll talk about transitions. This is key if you want to be able to quickly read a paragraph. If they overtly use these transitions it's quick to find them. And then the final one is the conclusion, okay. The final one is the conclusion. So let's look at then how that looks. Let's look at the first one. We're going to talk about actually two types of topic sentences. But let's look at the standard one up here for summarizing anything, for summarizing anything.

So keep in mind it's this pattern straight right here, okay? So the first thing then is of course we're going to say in the and then something. In this case it's an article. But it might be a lecture, it might be a video, it might be an observation if you're in science class. It might be a construction of something. And it might even be a trip to. So if you're taking trips and some field trips they might then on, instead of the in the article, they might say on the trip to the Smithsonian we discovered several things, okay? And then we'd go ahead and talk about those several things. So that's the key thing. So it's... and I use, we use article, because that's what we were reading from.

And then the other one then, the key thing then is that you then list the verb. What is the author trying to do? Is the author trying to explain which I said, and that's a good generic one. Is he trying to compare? Is she trying to show? What is she trying to do? And then the last one is really the topic. So that's your generic one. But I want to give you one more that a guy named Sparks came up with from Beverly Hills High School. And he came up with this in the 70s, and it's another generic one. It's another generic one called the power statement.

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How many of you are familiar with Sparks? Okay. It's called the power statement. And in the power statement that they're trying to do then they're just making it very overt what I'm going to talk about. The key thing then in a power statement, and you don't have this in your notes... And if you don't like power statement I also call it a number statement. And the key thing, all you're thinking about is how many details. And these aren't supporting details these are the big ideas, okay, I'll put an MI next to it, the main ideas.

How many main ideas do we have in our note sheet? Two. So if you want to be very elementary you'd say two. You want to be a little bit more sophisticated you might say a couple. If there were three, you would say three. If you want to be more sophisticated you might say several. You can just keep on going with ... basically these are just number words. Okay? We're referring to words. I use these a lot when I'm not sure how many details I'm going to have when I finish. So I'll use these generic ones to make sure I don't have to go back and fix my topic sentence. Let's go ahead then and look at... and look at the idea of writing that topic sentence. So let's just see we can then go ahead and write that topic sentence. So we have then it's good readers. So how many details again are we going to talk about? Two. So the simple topic sentence is effective readers employ two ideas when reading text. So there's my topic sentence. So let's look at did I do it right first of all? Did I just give you the elements? So did I give you how many things I'm going to talk about? Yes, so we clearly know that we're going to talk about two things. And did I mention the topic, effective readers and basically what they do?

So I hit that. I used the word employ. You use words of course that your English teachers will tell us that these kinds of verbs are better than what other verbs might

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I use before I started really thinking about my writing? I would have used effective readers do or even the word use. Yeah, those are real elementary ... what? Have. Ooh, good, have would be another one. Just circle them and say we need to go back, that one's too elementary now that we're at the high school level or the middle school level we need to think of a better verb to fit in that spot. So that gets them to think about their own writing.

And then the other one I used to use a lot, my favorite word before I started doing these kinds of workshops is the word things, which I know the English teachers kind of cringe when they see that word. So I would still use it but I would be for sure crossing it out eventually and using, putting a better way of saying it, okay? But I want your struggling reader, your kid that doesn't write at all, let him use thing when he starts off, we'll just teach him to fix it. And it might at the beginning be one word he always changes. And then as he gets better at it we start changing more and more.

So if you guys can go ahead and take a blank piece of paper and go ahead and write that first topic sentence please. Okay, I want you guys to look at this and tell me how many big ideas is ... it's from Doug Reeves' book. Look at this sentence and tell me how many ideas he's going to talk about and maybe what is his big idea, what is his topic? How many ideas? And the topic? Why do I show this? Because I do get some, certainly at the high school level where they are trying to get kids up to college and beyond, that they're moving a lot of kids past this basic topic sentence. But clearly Doug Reeves, educational researcher, uses it in his own writing. Guess what as a reader I love it, because guess what he does, he explains himself quite

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well. It's a fast read for me. It's a very fast read, because he's so overt. He's so overt. And he even gives you the first transition, doesn't he?

The other one is go ahead and look at this one. And again how many big ideas? A few. This is from a book called "Classroom Instruction That Works". How many of you are familiar with Marzano's work? A lot of people are. He's well known these days with Pickering. And what happens is if you're not familiar with it I've tabbed the page that gives Marzano's nine most effective strategies and they're all research based. He really looks at research using standardized test measurements and he gives you the studies, how many people were in the study; really kind of nails it. Keep in mind these nine strategies to get to this kind of results have to be mastered. And he would highly recommend doing only one in a school year.

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**Segment 6 – Adding Detail**

MB: Let's go ahead and go to then our next one then is adding then transition words, write blue. So what's a simple transition word? Well, you saw Reeves, what did he use? He used first. Well, let's use first also. So right next to that period say first. And what are we going to focus on? We're going to say first and we're going to talk about what? Purposeful. So I'm going to have you go ahead and put that in a sentence.

After that I want you then to go ahead and write these two ideas in two complete sentences too. I'm going to have you go ahead and have you do your second part.

And what are you going to use for your transition word? Second. And we'll talk about other ways of transitioning your reader. Alright, let's go to the last thing before we wrap it up. The last one then is the conclusion. And simply in conclusion, all right. And there are better ones. Some other ones that you can use, all in all, obviously, clearly. I like clearly as you guys have probably found that out. Clearly. Clearly, I like clearly.

But I want you to note something for conclusion. I want you to note something, the key thing for conclusion. The key thing for conclusion is, and this is Carol Yargo out of Santa Monica High School, an English teacher, written a lot of books for the high school level, and what she said that was key at a workshop I saw her present at, was that the conclusion is the significance of your topic. It's the significance of your topic. It's the so what. It's the so what or it's who cares. Okay?

So who cares if you know about good readers? In conclusion, understanding what good readers do will make me a better reader. In conclusion, if I think about the purpose and being active when I read I too can be a good reader. Let's look at then

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some samples as we go through this. The first one then is doing... this is a geography note taking, and so this one had three big ideas for China's geography. But when the student had to write their paragraph the teacher only assigned ... wait, hold on. The teacher only assigned and asked them to pick two. So I'm going to flip back again, I'm going to drive you crazy, but let me flip back again. There are three, but the teacher then said pick two of these three big ideas and write about them. So sometimes if it's a time issue or a content issue we want them to really look at their notes carefully, we might have them only select two even though there's three or four or five or six big ideas, because it might be hard to ask Johnny to write a five minute paragraph with ten big ideas.

You got to figure at least a minute for every idea and that you should have least probably 20 or 30 minutes to knock that one out, because each idea is going to have a supporting sentence too. So it just might ask for too much. So you can always cut it down. The other slide that I jumped over originally was, keep in mind this was my big aha, if you're using technology keep in mind this structure that we're talking about, big idea or main idea, supporting ideas is basically a PowerPoint presentation. The title is your big idea and your bulleted items are your supporting. Okay, so if kids have to do multimedia, explain a lab experiment you're adding video, you're adding other multi media and slides keep in mind that you're doing the same thing. And really the only difference between this sheet and this sheet, because what is this, this is your slide title and this is your bulleted items. This is your slide title, this is your bulleted items. Okay, so it's that straightforward. The only thing I added was I added questions at the top, because again I want them to ask questions about what they're studying.

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And let's go ahead and look at this. First of all, how many things did she talk about? Two. Now she did something that's terrible, didn't she? What did she do? She wrote the number two, didn't she? Yeah, you see the number there? She wrote the number two. That's okay, it's a rough draft. All the samples I give you are all rough drafts. I didn't ask for final drafts from the student because what am I concerned about? I'm concerned about the content. Okay?

And what's her first thing that she talks about? The Gobi Desert. How did you know it was the first thing? She said first feature. So that's really the phrase she constantly uses. What's her next thing she talks about? The mountain range. And what was her transitional phrase? The second and she added the final. She goes to the Shannon school of adding words. The final feature.

And this is all about the mountain range. What's wrong with her topic sentence? See what she did? She copied ... I'm sorry, I asked the wrong question. What's wrong with her concluding sentence? It's the same idea. So as you can see, now if I get an example like this in September I clearly know I've got to talk about that what. What's so significant about them knowing the geographical areas of China? I've got to give them that question. I say when you write your conclusion today I want you to answer simply this question. What is so significant about knowing the geographical areas? Or what is so significant about China's geographical areas?

FS: I'll say to my students when you're writing the conclusion you're just not writing the end, you're writing so what do you know now.

MB: Ooh, I like that. Okay. Say it again Linda.

FS: I'm saying to them what do you know now. It's your conclusion that you're writing not just a conclusion to the paper.

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MB: What do you know now?

FS: And it makes it personal to them.

MB: So actually some of Carol Yargo's stuff, what's significant and then also that question, starts getting a nice beefy concluding paragraph or multiple concluding paragraphs in an essay form. Good. Very good. And that's an easy question. Mary that was the ... this is what I always struggle with at the elementary, when I work with elementary school teachers, that I don't know how to simply put this most significant, because most elementary kids don't understand that idea of most. I use so what and that kind. But I think that's a good way of putting it too.

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**Segment 7 –Writing and Comprehension**

MB: I want to show you another example ... I'm trying to think where I have it ... because one of the comments I get is they want more student examples. So let's look at a student example. This is a science example about matter by Mr. Dolan. And Dolan does teach at, Mr. Dolan teaches at Wilson Middle, the same as Martha that I showed you that other example about the law and the drinking, teens and drinking. So there's his note sheet that he does, he did whole group with his class. But instead of letting them be so passive learners, he then forced them, not forced them, he told them, [laughter] he might have forced some, to then go ahead and write it in paragraph form. So the topic sentence is a little different, it's more of a statement. And then she has to prove that statement. Okay? So what has she used then as transition words? Simply first. You find the next transition word? Second. Makes it fast to read.

My argument is this it takes more time to correct 150 Scantron tests at the beach then it does to correct 150 paragraphs at the beach, because clearly you can't bring the Scantron down to the beach, one day maybe. Clearly you can. And it is fast because what are you concerned about? Maybe not as much the verbiage but do they understand the concepts, okay. Did they get the concepts is the key thing.

Okay, a couple of final comments because it looks like we're over, so a couple of final comments for you. The one thing is we talked only about organization. And when we talk about writing we have to consider the other traits of good writing. If you're not familiar with Vicky Spindell's book, and she's out of Oregon, then you might look at Creating Writers, okay? And this is just a wonderful book because she talks about

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all the traits of good writing. I only talk about organization. There's ideas, conventions, word choice, voice and sentence fluency.

Okay, so keep that in mind. There's six of them. They do the plus one because of the presentation. Okay, that's the new one that they're adding. So do look at her work. Do look at her work.

The other final thing as we look at these slides then is that you want to keep in mind that all these things are happening when you're asking kids to write, because we can do cooperative learning even, we could have small group. But we're asking them to organize their thoughts in a graphic organizer, generate questions and to summarize. So all the big ideas in comprehension are being done simply by asking kids to write a paragraph.

And this is out of the National Reading Panel Report. The other one if you hated everything I said please look at the other ideas and you've got some three new, more ideas to look at. If you're really looking at Kay Concella's stuff, there's her resource down here. I talked about her earlier. She's out of San Francisco. It gives you even a phone number to contact. She talks a lot at secondary conferences. But talk about how to read or summarize a textbook.

And then the other thing, I think the main thing that we always have to consider is that writing clarifies the process. It helps kids with their vocabulary. And most importantly, you notice reasoning errors. You instantly know if they didn't get the topic. And then finally keep in mind our second language learners from whatever country, because it's amazing as I go to different states I have different immigrant groups that are coming in, speaking another language, keep in mind all these ideas work then with our second language population that come into our school systems.

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You guys were a wonderful audience. I will be here taking stuff down so if you have some more questions I'll be happy to answer those. Again, thank you very much.

(Applause)