

Predictable Chart Writing – Five Day Process

Day 1: Write the Chart.

- Choose a topic for your chart based on a book read recently, a topic being studied, or a recent field trip – something of interest to your student(s). For example, after reading the book 'Dear Zoo' (by Rod Campbell), your chart topic might be "Pets I want".
- Choose a sentence starter to match the topic of the chart and the level of your student(s). For our example chart about Pets, we might use the sentence starter "I want a ..."
- Ensure that you spend some time discussing your topic prior to beginning your chart. Support students using communication systems to find the words they want in their system if necessary.
- Write the sentence starter clearly on a piece of chart paper, or on an interactive whiteboard, being sure to talk about the letters you are using, the fact that you are leaving spaces between each word, the process of writing from left to right, and other essential print concepts and conventions as you write. Complete this first sentence with your chosen animal (for our example chart) and put your name in brackets at the end of the sentence.
- For each child you rewrite the sentence starter. Keep the words nicely lined up to help make the pattern visual, and as with your sentence, talk about your writing process. Each child provides an animal name (in our example) to complete the sentence. For children who have a communication system, they can use that to give you an animal name; otherwise, you can provide a range of animal toys, symbols, or pictures for them to choose from, or they could point out their choice from an animal book. You could also put a variety of animals names on to a Step-by-Step device and have a single message device set up with "That's the one I want" so the child can step through the names and let you know which one he or she wants. Put the child's name in brackets behind their sentence. We do NOT add any pictures to the chart. The focus is on the letters and words – the print.
- NOTE: If you are working with an individual student, you can have them select 4 - 6 words to complete the sentence so that you have a few sentences to work with over the next few days. You could also add in some more of your own. Alternatively, the student can interview some classmates to get their responses.

Day 2: Reread/Work with Chart

- Reread the sentences on the chart, pointing to each word as you go. Students can clap, chant, rap or sign along with you.
- Remind students about the use of our 'inner voice' during reading ("reading it in your head"). Read each line and then encourage students to use their inner voice to read it again.
- Use the sentences to focus in on some key features of the print. For example, you might count the number of words in a sentence, or the number of letters in a word; or you can search for particular words or letters in the chart.
- Give students their own sentence(s) to read with their inner voice. You can also have them complete a similar activity to above to focus in on features of the print.

Day 3: Cut-up sentences

- Prepare two copies of each students' sentence(s) on individual strips (for some students you might want an extra copy or two).
- Reread the chart, pausing to encourage children to reread with their inner voice.
- Give students their own sentence strips and have them reread their own sentences.
- Model how to cut your own sentence strip into individual words, then ask students to cut up their sentence strip(s) into individual words. Initially, allow them to cut where they wish – no dotted lines or marks (this is why you have spare copies)! If necessary, model and discuss the fact that we need to look for the spaces between the words to find where to cut. This helps students to develop their concept of what a word is (i.e. by looking for the space between the words). For students unable to cut their own strips, an adult can slowly drag scissors along the strip and the student can let the adult know where to cut – honour their choice, even if it is not where you would choose to cut! This [post](#) includes an example about the learning curve of this step for a student.
- Students then experiment with building sentences with their words. This is a great opportunity to reinforce the convention that we read sentences from left to right. Read each attempt the student makes and discuss whether it looks right, sounds right, and makes sense. You can compare to the model sentence and help them to match to that once they have had a few attempts.
- For students who cannot physically manipulate the words, you can use eye-gaze or partner assisted scanning for the student to select which word they want first, and next to build their sentence.
- REMEMBER: The focus is always on the print and on whether it makes sense. Avoid adding pictures or symbols at this stage.

Day 4: Be the Sentence

- Reread the chart, encouraging and giving an opportunity for students to read using inner voice.
- Choose enough students to have a word each from one of the sentences. Have them come to the front of the space. Give each student a card with one word from the sentence. If you have some, record each word onto a single message device and hand those out with the appropriate word, or students can say the word with their communication device. Challenge the students to put themselves in the right order to make the sentence. Other students can help by giving directions. Once they are happy with their order, have them each say their word and compare/contrast with model, having them try again if they are not correct. Allow another group of students to “be” a different sentence.
- For individual students, you can still use words on cards and/or single message devices, and ask the student to rearrange them to form sentences.

Day 5: Make the Book

- Each student is responsible for creating his or her own page(s) for a group or class book. They need to put the words from the cut up sentence strip back into order. Once ordered correctly, the words are glued onto a sheet of paper (a page in the book). Students then illustrate their page with, for example, a drawing (another great way to teach students about 'making marks'), a photograph (great for personalised books), pictures cut from magazines, or digital images. Ask each student sign his/her page, in a manner appropriate to each student – great functional practice of writing your name. Finish the book by creating a cover page, laminating and binding together all the pages, thereby creating a book for your class library.
- Naturally, the books can also be created with a variety of software programmes (PowerPoint, Clicker, Story Maker) or apps (Pictello, Book Creator, Clicker Books etc.) The aim is to make the book accessible to as many students as possible. To take things a step further, what about publishing your book on the [Tar Heel Reader](#) site for others to enjoy?!
- If you are working with an individual student, allow them to complete the full process for some of their sentences. Other sentences you can complete for them but still allow them to select or create the illustration, and to sign the page. If they have interviewed classmates, it would be nice for those classmates to contribute their illustrations for the final book!