Speaking and Writing Response Protocols

Explicit Instruction and Speaking/ Writing Frame Scaffolds

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An important part of the Benchmark Advance writing instructional strand involves the explicit teaching, modeling, and repeated application of the writing process.

- These written responses engage students in processing, connecting, synthesizing, and deepening comprehension as they express their new understandings through speaking and writing.
- They are an opportunity to check on students' comprehension as well as their growing vocabulary and content knowledge related to the unit's topic.
- They also provide an opportunity for you to monitor and provide feedback on students' developing use of grade-level grammar, mechanics, and text structure skills.

However, these written responses are not informal, loosely created writing experiences. They require explicit teaching, modeling, and scaffolding such as using sentence and paragraph frames to teach students how to effectively respond to these prompts. This instruction should begin in the first weeks of school when you are establishing classroom routines and should continue throughout the year.

Scaffolds play a critical role in this instruction. Like all scaffolds, they need to be introduced and utilized early in the year, then slowly removed using the gradual release of responsibility model. Therefore, the following is suggested:

- Use the written response frames and supports for all students during the first four units of the year (Units 1–4). This is where you will explicitly model (thinking aloud and co-creating with students) the written responses using the scaffolds and citing specific text evidence to complete the frames.
- During Units 5–7, provide the written response frames and supports for *only* those students you have determined can benefit from the extra assistance or for students who request the support.
- During the remaining units (Units 8–10) do not provide the written response frames and supports. If students struggle completing the written responses, revisit the tasks during small-group instruction and use the frames and supports at that time.
- These frames can also serve as speaking frames any time throughout the year for students who need that level of support.

In *Writing for Understanding: Using Backward Design to Help All Students Write Effectively*, the Vermont Writing Collaborative team (Joey Hawkins, Eloise Ginty, Karen LeClaire Kurzman, Diana Leddy, and Jane Miller) offers these and other guiding principles:

- Direct instruction and lots of guided practice are essential.
- Guided conversations with others before writing is critical for struggling writers to build deeper meaning before they write. Do not skip on this critical pre-writing step.
- Many students have not internalized text structures, especially informational text structures, so providing supports built around the structures can be quite beneficial as a starting point. It does not create formulaic written responses if used as a *temporary* scaffold. "Writing structures are not sufficient for effective writing, but they are a necessary foundation." (p. 98) They give students a way to organize their thoughts and make meaning from a text. The structure allows the students to think deeply about the ideas in the text without having to over-focus on how to display those ideas in writing. Strong structures provide students with scaffolded experiences in building strong, coherent pieces of writing that reflect their understandings.
- It is important that you clearly identify the central ideas (essential understandings) you want your students to understand about a piece of text and construct writing prompts and supports that build toward that understanding. This provides a clear focus for the writing.
- Graphic organizers can be used as effective scaffolds. They help students keep track of their ideas as they collect and refine them. They are a visible representation of their thinking.
- Sentence and paragraph frames are effective when they guide students to share their understandings and connect to the structure of the piece read. They allow them discrete places to cite and record text evidence.
- "Writing is all about understanding." (p. 159) A student cannot write about a topic they know very little about. So, knowledge-building through strong topics and related text pieces (such as those in each unit of Benchmark Advance) is essential. Once the knowledge is built, students need a structure, purpose, and audience to guide their writing. On that can be layered writer's craft techniques to enhance the delivery of that information (e.g., use vivid verbs, provide appropriate details, etc.).
- Structures to provide include teacher-written models, models co-constructed by the teacher and students, and writing templates or frames for support.

Writing Frames

One of the ways to assess students' understanding of informational text is by having them write brief summaries of the most essential ideas. Summarizing is an important reading strategy and critical writing skill. It involves selecting, organizing, and synthesizing the most important elements in a piece of text. By using their own words, students demonstrate what they have learned. Summaries include key ideas and details, are brief, do not contain the students' opinions, and are organized in a logical sequence.

Summarizing is a very difficult skill for many early readers and writers. Writing a good summary requires a great deal of modeling and guided practice. Summary writing frames are a useful scaffold to support in this work. These frames provide a structure for students to summarize key ideas in each text structure and use signal words from that text structure to connect ideas (Blevins and Boynton, 2014).

Use the sentence and paragraph frames on the following pages to assist students in creating written responses to prompts.

Text Structures

Young readers are often challenged by the organizational structure of informational text. In contrast to narrative text, in which the plot flows from one event to the next, informational materials usually segment a topic into various topics.

The content is commonly structured in one of the following ways:

1. cause and effect,
2. compare and contrast,
3. problem and solution,
4. sequence (chronology) or time order,
5. description or listing, or
6. a combination of the above.

In each new piece of informational text, the reader must uncover the organizational pattern in order to comprehend the relationship of ideas. Research has shown a strong link between a student's comprehension of informational text and his/her understanding of the way the text is organized (Seidenberg, 1989; Pearson and Fielding, 1991; Weaver and Kintsch, 1991). Even those these things can be a challenge, we must not forget the tremendous payoff that teaching our students to read informational text will have.

Why Is It Important?

Most children acquire the knowledge of narrative structures naturally, through years of hearing, reading, and telling narrative stories (Montague and Graves, 1993). In contrast, informational text structures must be formally taught and applied to both reading and writing experiences.

The ability to understand and write informational text is essential for school achievement (Seidenberg, 1989). Students will encounter a larger number of informational texts as they progress through the grades, each posing special challenges. The Common Core State Standards require that *by* Grade 4, 50% of the texts students encounter be informational. Students' success or failure in meeting the challenges of this type of text has far-reaching consequences.

Learning About Text Structures

Informational texts have both a content focus and a structure. The structure is the organizational pattern *within* the text. It ties the ideas together. Understanding the structure enables students to better comprehend the content. The first task is being able to identify the structure of a piece of text. The next task is knowing how to use that structure to organize the content (Just and Carpenter, 1987).

The 5 Most Common Structures of Informational Text

Just like fiction, which has plot structure that students must learn and recognize, informational texts follow basic structures as well. Five kinds of text structures, or patterns of organization, are commonly found in informational texts.

1. **Description or listing** provides information, such as facts, characteristics, and attributes about a subject, event, person or concept. This organization is the most common pattern found in textbooks (Niles, 1965; Bartlett, 1978). Here is an example:

   The dinosaurs were four to eight feet long, about the size of kangaroos. They had small heads and long necks, and they walked on two or four legs.

2. **Sequence (chronology) or time order** presents a series of events that take place in a time order. The author traces the sequence or the steps in the process. An example is:

   Trouble had been brewing for more than 10 years. In 1763 Britain defeated France in the French and Indian War. Britain then tried to tighten control over its 13 colonies and tax the colonies more heavily.

3. **Compare and contrast** points out the likenesses and/or differences between two or more subjects. For example:

   The cheetah can run 70 mph. In the 1996 Olympic games, Michael Johnson set a world record and captured the gold medal when he ran 200 meters in 19.32 seconds. That's 23 mph.

4. **Cause and effect** attempts to explain why something happens; how facts or events (causes) lead to other facts or events (effects). A single cause often has several effects. Also, a single event may have several causes. This paragraph describes causes and effects:

   As the left plate slides down into the earth, it enters the hot mantle. Rocks in the sliding plate begin to melt, and they form magma.

5. **Problem and solution** describes a problem and presents one or more solutions to that problem. The following is an example:

   Environmentalists are battling to save remaining native species. Scientists and private citizens are attempting to preserve 4,000 acres on the island of Hawaii by literally fencing them off against alien invader species.

Signal Words

A good writer connects ideas within the text with words and phrases. These connectives, or ties, can act as signals to an informed reader who is trying to identify the text structure. The chart below shows some of the connectives that authors use to signal different text structures and the message they transmit to the reader. The chart also lists the graphic organizer that can be used for students to gather information as they read. These graphic organizers serve as key reference tools when speaking and writing about the text, including the completion of a paragraph writing frame. It is ideal to post this chart (with signal words and sample graphic organizers) in the classroom for students' reference.

Text Structure Overview

Text Structure	Signal Words		Graphic Organizer
Description A list or set of characteristics will follow.	for example for instance characteristics include	another to illustrate furthermore	Word or Idea Web
Sequence (Chronological Order) A sequence of events or steps in a process is being described.	first, second, third next last before after during	then finally meanwhile in (year) (dates in order)	Sequence Chart (with directional arrows)
Compare & Contrast Likenesses and differences are being presented and/or discussed.	similar to like same different unlike in contrast also as well as	both however on the other hand yet whereas although cause	Venn Diagram
Cause & Effect Evidence of cause(s) and effect(s) will be given.	because effect as a result of as a consequence	due to if . . . then since reason	Cause-Effect Chart (with directional arrows)
Problem & Solution Problems and solutions will be described.	problem solution solve therefore	as a result because since	since Problem-Solution Chart (with directional arrows)

Analytic Writing

Paragraph writing frames are an excellent way to scaffold student writing of informational text (Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1989). But they have other benefits, such as helping students analyze text more deeply.

- These frames are equally effective with young students or older students who struggle with writing.
- Originally designed for use with textbook material, the frames are equally useful with nonfiction trade books or magazine or newspaper articles.
- These frames help students to further their understanding of the most frequently encountered informational text patterns, which include description, sequence, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution.
- Paragraph writing frames employ the cloze procedure, providing sentence starters that include signal words or phrases.
- When these frames are completed, students have written a paragraph that follows one of the most commonly used informational text structures.
- After learning about each expository text pattern through these strategies, students can then try their hand at writing paragraphs illustrating each pattern.

Paragraph Writing Frame Routine: An Introduction
(Barbara Moss, 1989)

Step 1	Introduce the various frames one at a time. First model the writing of a sample paragraph illustrating the organizational pattern being introduced. For example, you could write a paragraph about a topic that illustrates sequence. In this paragraph you would use signal words like *first, next, then*, and *finally*.
Step 2	After that you would review the sequence of events in the paragraph with students.
Step 3	At this point you would give students the sentences on sentence strips and have them arrange the sentences in order.
Step 4	Depending on their age, students might then copy the strips in paragraph form onto their papers.
Step 5	You then introduce the frame and fill it in with the students' responses. It may be helpful for students to have the first sentence of the frame provided for them.

Sample Generic Paragraph Writing Frames

Below are examples of generic writing frames. They can be used as is, or they can be modified to be text specific. In the first four units of Benchmark Advance, both generic and text-specific frames are provided in the Additional Materials link (Barbara Moss; adapted from Armbruster, B., Anderson, T.H., & Ostertag, J., 1989. "Teaching Text Structure to Improve Reading and Writing." Reading Teacher, 43, 130–137.).

Description

_____ have many interesting features. First, they have _____,

which allow them to _____. Second, they have _____, which are

_____. Last, they have _____, which _____.

Sequence (Chronology)

The first step in making a _____ is to _____. After that you

must _____. Third, you need to _____. Finally, you _____.

Compare and Contrast

Both _____ and _____ are similar in many ways. They are similar because

_____. They are also similar because _____. In some ways, though,

_____ and _____ are different. They are different because _____ is

_____. So, _____ and _____ have both similarities and differences.

Cause and Effect

Because of _____, _____ happened. Therefore,

_____. This explains why _____.

Problem and Solution

The problem was that _____. This problem happened because

_____. The problem was finally solved when _____.

Text-Specific Application

The shorter, generic writing frames can be used as is or as models to create text-specific frames. Below is an example of a text-specific Problem/Solution writing frame for a selection about beach erosion in Louisiana. Note that key signal words are highlighted to draw students' attention to the words that connect ideas across the text. These are the kinds of words that identify a text structure and are the words we want students to be quite familiar with—using them in both writing and speaking, as well as readily identifying them in text.

Problem-and-Solution Writing Frame

People are working hard to stop the **problem** of beach erosion.

Some people are _____

_____.

In Louisiana, _____

_____.

Other **solutions** include _____

_____.

We can also help **solve** the **problem**. We can _____

_____.

All these **solutions** can help save our Earth.

Making Connections

Students are often asked to compare and contrast the information in two (or more) of the texts that they read on the same topic. Analyzing and synthesizing information across texts will help students prepare for assessments. Students complete a writing prompt to integrate information from the two texts by writing an opinion or explanation and citing text evidence from both sources to support their point of view of their cited information.

The two writing frames below (Blevins and Boynton, 2014)—one for opinion and one for reading across texts—give students the practice they need to meet the making connections requirement in the Common Core State Standards and other state standards.

Reading Across Texts Paragraph Frame

_____ and _____ are different texts on the same topic.

The author of _____ included details such as _____

_____.

This helped make the topic more meaningful to me because _____

_____.

The author of _____ included details such as _____

_____.

This helped make the topic more meaningful because _____

_____.

think the more useful text on the topic was _____ because _____.

Opinion Paragraph Frame

In discussions of _____, one controversial issue has been _____.

People who believe _____ claim that _____.

On the other hand, those who believe _____ assert that _____.

My own view is _____.

Sample Revision Assignments

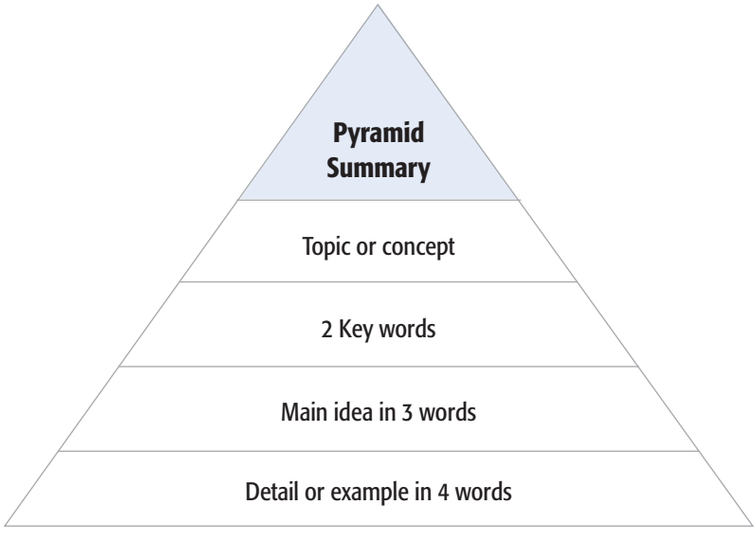
Once the students complete the frames, they can be evaluated and used to deepen students' writing skills. Provide revision assignments that focus on adding more details (e.g., text evidence) or modifying the text to address any writing skill (e.g., precise vocabulary, vivid verbs, sentence variety by combing some sentences). Do this by underlining a sentence or sentences and asking students to revise them based on the targeted instructional goal. For example, you might underline a statement that is more general in nature and ask students to "add two more pieces of information to support your statement/opinion/reasons."

Summary Pyramid

In addition to paragraph frames, other popular techniques can be used to assist students in summarizing information read. One popular technique is the Summary Pyramid. It can be used generically, or text-specific prompts can be provided for each line of the pyramid. See the two examples below.

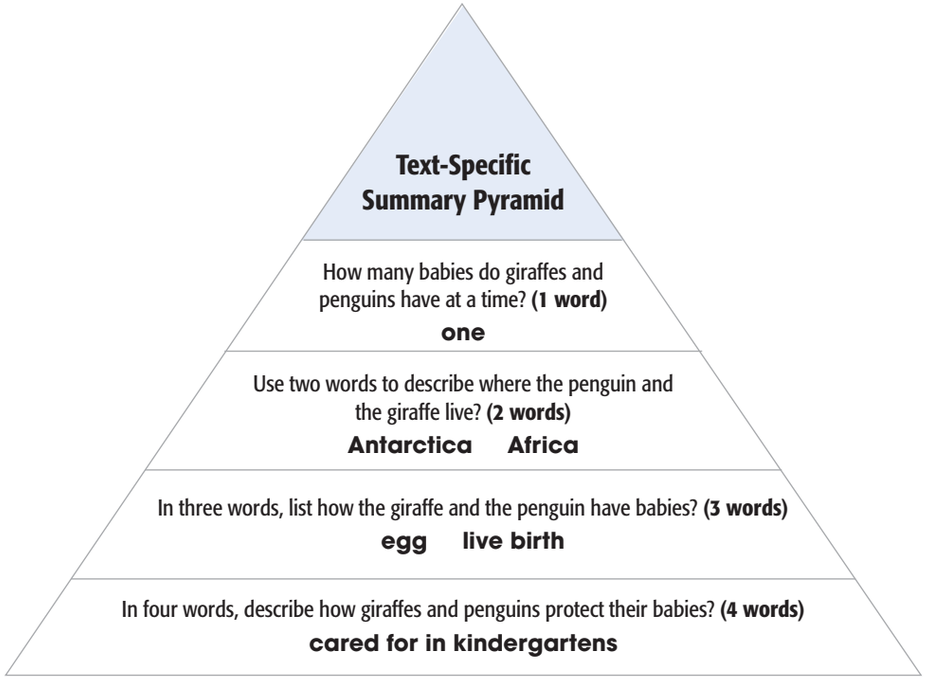
Generic Summary Pyramid

This generic Summary Pyramid can be use with any informational text.



Text-Specific Summary Pyramid

This Text-Specific Summary Pyramid is based on an article about giraffes. The teacher provides a question that can be answered using the specified number of words. These questions focus on the key ideas in the text.



Helping Your Students Write Constructed Responses

When students write about what they are learning, it solidifies that learning and reflects a high level of comprehension. It is also reflective of their communication skills—general writing, spelling, vocabulary choice, depth of understanding, and so on. It serves as a powerful assessment tool as students are required to demonstrate their knowledge. You, the teacher, can use this information to offer corrective feedback and modify upcoming instruction.

For students to be able to construct high-quality written responses, you must model *how* to do this frequently. You can start with sentence frames and starters, then build to paragraph frames to help students internalize the structure and vocabulary of strongly written responses. It is recommended to model frequently in the early part of the year through "Write Alouds" where you provide the frames and talk aloud about how you locate the information and evidence in the text to complete the frame, then model the actual written completion of the frame.

Discuss the structure and vocabulary in the frame. Have students record the completed frames in their writing notebooks and annotate them with tips to create future written responses. And, as always, remind them that these writing frames provide excellent speaking frames that can help them organize their ideas when sharing with classmates.

Steps for Creating Constructed Written Response

Step 1: Read the prompt or question and restate to ensure understanding.

Step 2: Offer an initial general answer (one that can and will be improved based on text evidence).

Step 3: Return to the text to find evidence to add to and support your answer.

Step 4: Add the evidence to the written response.

Step 5: Add a concluding statement to your response to connect back to the prompt or question (purpose of the response).

Step 6: Reread the written response aloud to check that it flows smoothly and provides sufficient details and evidence.

Sample Lesson Model for Benchmark Advance

This sample model is from Grade 3, Unit 1, Week 2. Students are asked to compare and contrast two animals. Use this example model as you guide students to create written responses throughout Benchmark Advance.

Step 1: Read the prompt or question and restate to ensure understanding.	**Prompt:** *Reread paragraphs 5 and 6. Compare and contrast the fur of Arctic foxes and cheetahs. Would a cheetah's fur help it survive a winter in the Arctic? Why or why not? Cite specific text evidence to support your answer.*
Step 2: Offer an initial general answer (one that can and will be improved based on text evidence).	Elicit students' general answers. Have students discuss with partners before sharing to the entire group.
Step 3: Return to the text to find evidence to add to and support your answer.	Model: *Let's go back into the text to find evidence–specific details–that can support our answer.* *In paragraph 5, I see that the Arctic is covered in white snow in winter, but has many bare, brown patches in summer. I'll underline this information in the passage, since it relates directly to words used in the question.* *In paragraph 6, I see the signal word "unlike," which lets me know that the author is making a contrast. I'll circle that in the text. I see that unlike the fur of the Arctic fox, which changes color to match the ground, the cheetah's fur stays the same all year. Since this fur is gold with black spots, the cheetah would not have camouflage it normally uses to hunt. So, I can conclude that a cheetah's fur would not help it survive in the Arctic.*
Step 4: Add the evidence to the written response.	Model: *Let's use the evidence we found to write our ideas. We can use this writing frame to record the evidence and better organize our ideas. Notice how I record details from the text about each animal's fur in the frame.* Display the following frame: *Both _____ and _____ are similar in many ways. They both have _____ that helps them survive, or live. The fur of the _____ is _____. Unlike the fur of the _____, the fur of the _____ is _____. As a result, _____.* *So, I can conclude that a cheetah's fur __(would/would not)__ help it survive in the Arctic.*
Step 5: Add a concluding statement to your response to connect back to the prompt or question (purpose of the response).	Model: *Notice that the last sentence in the writing frame is a concluding statement that goes back directly to the question asked in the prompt: Would a cheetah's fur help it survive a winter in the Arctic?*
Step 6: Reread the written response aloud to check that it flows smoothly and provides sufficient details and evidence.	*Let's reread together our finished written response to our prompt.* (Guide students in a choral rereading.) *Does is flow smoothly? Does it give enough details? Is there anything we should revise, or change, to make it better?*

Paragraph Writing Frame Routine: An Introduction (Barbara Moss, 1989)

Teaching Students to Construct Written Response to Text (Radliff, 2015) recommends the following implementation tips to help students understand and better plan their writing for response prompts:

1. Model, model, model. Think aloud about the process as you write as often as needed.
2. Use sentences frames and sentence starters from oral conversations to scaffold toward longer paragraph writing frames. For example, simple question responses can be created that can later be used to form a cohesive paragraph.
3. Explicitly teach the academic vocabulary of the standards (e.g., words such as "describe," "detail," "analyze").
4. Model how to deconstruct and reconstruct the question. For example, connect a more academic word in the standard (e.g., describe) to a known word or phrase (e.g., tell about). Mark up the prompt with these connections (e.g., write "tell about" above the word "describe").
5. Model with a think-aloud how to go back into the text to find specific evidence to answer the question or prompt. Then model using that evidence as you write.
6. Teach and model the meaning of the word "because" and how to include it in oral and written responses.
7. Include written responses in your instruction frequently so students have multiple learning and practicing opportunities.

Written Response Rubric

Use the following rubric to evaluate your students' written responses.

4	• The question is restated in the written response. • The question is answered using precise words from the text. • At least two specific details from the text are provided. • Proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation are used.
3	• The question is restated in the written response. • The question is answered using some precise words from the text. • One specific detail from the text is provided. • There are almost no spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.
2	• The question is restated in the written response. • The answer to the question may or may not use some precise words from the text. • No specific details from the text are provided. • There are several spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.
1	• The question is not restated in the written response. • The answer to the question does not use words from the text. • No specific details from the text are provided. • There are many spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

Additional Response Writing Activities to Add Variety to Your Routines

Responding to texts improves comprehension of what is read and is critical in many English Language Arts, social studies, and science writing assignments. There are multiple simple ways to help students read and respond to texts (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999). Use these and other response activities to vary your Benchmark Advance instruction throughout the year (courtesy Georgia Department of Education website). These response activities can push your students to dig deeper with a text and display their growing knowledge and skills through writing.

One Sentence, Three Quotations

After reading a text, record on the board one sentence (in your own words) that is the big idea in the text. Then locate and record three sentences from the text that support this big idea. Write (quote) the sentences exactly as written in the text. Think aloud as you do this, explaining how this text evidence supports the big idea of the text and why you chose it over other details.

Routine:

1. Model, model, model. Select a text (make sure you model for both fiction and informational text). Ask students to read the text. You can also model this with a text you have read aloud.
2. Brainstorm with students the big, or main, idea in the text—the major takeaway. Work together to construct a sentence to display that idea. Write the sentence on the board.
3. Have students work with partners to find text evidence to support this big idea and discuss why this evidence is stronger than other details in the text. Monitor the discussions.
4. Have students share and discuss their evidence sentences, decide on the three strongest pieces of evidence, then record those sentences on the board. Ask students to share why they feel this evidence is the strongest. You might wish to record the page and paragraph number for each sentence so that it can be easily found.
5. Chorally read with students the big idea sentence and the three text evidence quotes.
6. In subsequent lessons, you can vary the activity by providing three text evidence quotes and asking students to provide the big idea sentence.

Share One, Get One

This activity was developed by Rick Wormeli in *Summarization in Any Subject*. Make a 9-section grid, like a tic-tac-toe board. In three of the sections, have students write an important detail from the text they read, such as something new they learned. They can write a phrase or a sentence. Then have them meet with partners (it might take up to 6) to add new learnings they recorded on their grids. This activity is highly engaging and enables students to discuss their reading and learnings using the new vocabulary and concepts. It also helps you, the teacher, informally evaluate the basic understandings (or misunderstandings) students gleaned from the text.

The Visual Representation

After reading a text, guide students to create a visual representation of the big ideas. The drawings can be simple or complex based on the text and the students' drawing skills. Stick figures are fine!

Routine:

1. Model, model, model. Select a text (make sure you model for both fiction and informational text). Ask students to read the text. You can also model this with a text you have read aloud.
2. Using a Talk Aloud, share what ideas (visual pictures) popped into your mind as you read and explain what you will draw to remember them. As you draw these ideas, explain what you are drawing and why. Don't worry about being messy or a great artist!
3. Then assign a text for students to read and draw a visual representation of what they remember. Remind them that it doesn't have to be a scene; it can be a chart, a graph, a comic strip, or any other type of visual.
4. Provide time for students to share their visual representations in pairs, in small groups, or to the entire class.
5. Then have students write to explain their drawings. Prompt them to use key vocabulary from the text read.

Content Area Journal

Writing tasks during content-area lessons (science, math, social science) and when reading content area pieces during English Language Arts instruction affords students opportunities to think about, manipulate, and transform ideas.

Have students keep a content area journal where they respond to all science and social studies selections read in both English Language Arts time as well as content area instructional time. They can record new learnings, connect information across texts, explain procedures, write an account of a historical event or person's life, and so on. This is a great way to connect the science and social studies texts in *Benchmark Advance* to the texts and activities during content area lessons in other parts of the instructional day.

The Cento

This activity was adapted from Dr. Theresa Welford at Georgia Southern University. Students create a cento—or "found poem"—using words and phrases from the text read.

Routine:

1. Model, model, model. Select a text (make sure you model for both fiction and informational text). Ask students to read the text. Then explain *what* a cento is and that students will be constructing one using this text.
2. Ask students to identify words or phrases that stand out to them. Record them along with the page and paragraph number from which they came. Google Docs works well to record this information.
3. Once you have at least 14 lines, discuss with students how they might group them together.
4. Have students work with partners to generate ideas. Then have partners share out to the entire class. Remind them that they don't have to connect the words and phrases in the sequence in which they appear in the text.
5. Discuss with students how to organize the words and phrases into a poem. Decide on how the poem will be constructed. Remind students that poems do not have to rhyme. Introduce poetry terms like stanza and refrain, as needed.
6. Work with students to create the poem. Record it on the board or on chart paper. Keep in mind that the final product is not the key part of the activity, it's the explanation of why specific words and phrases were chosen and grouped that's important.
7. You can assign students a new text to create their own cento—individually or with partners.

Note: Recording the page and paragraph numbers during the activity is a great way to introduce how to create citations for older students.

Index Card

Ask students at the end of each lesson to write a one-minute closer on an index card. Students should create a question that addresses the topic or theme in the selection read. For example, the question can ask for the main idea, a summary, or an unsettled point.