

# THE FAITHFUL READER

## Writing Instruction: Back to Basics?

In a recent article entitled, “Is It Time to Go Back to Basics with Writing Instruction?” Katrina Schwartz describes an instructional model called “progressive mastery” used by schools in New York to go back to basics in writing instruction. The strategy is also called Writing is Thinking, which seems apt to me. Writing IS thinking - you must think in order to write coherently. Here are some basics about this strategy.



We know that students write more and better when they know a lot about the topic they are writing about. But what if they don't have the skills to actually write - to write sentences? The Writing is Thinking Strategy starts at the sentence level.

Teachers need to model, show, and tell how to write these sentences. Start simple - start with sentences that you know all students understand. The example to the right may be used as a starting point for older students to ensure that they understand the content and then the use of the conjunctions can be the focus.

These types of sentences look familiar, right? They look a lot like the instruction section - the top - of a grammar worksheet in an English textbook or workbook. It is fine to use those kinds of resources as a guide of how to teach what skills that your students need. But do not just assign. In order for students to really learn how to write clearly, you need to show, tell, and model how to do this, starting with sentences. Use an example that works well with your students to create an anchor chart - see page 2 of this newsletter to see how to create an anchor chart.

Students will need lots of practice, lots of “at bats” to gain confidence in writing good sentences. Give them time before you grade anything.

Squares are quadrilaterals because....

Squares are quadrilaterals but...

Squares are quadrilaterals so...

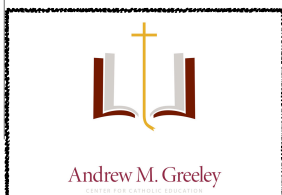
The North and South fought.

When

Why

adjusted sentence:

Read the full article here: <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/2017/02/20/is-it-time-to-go-back-to-basics-with-writing-instruction/>.



**Michelle P. Lia, EdD**  
 Assistant Director for Professional Development  
 Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education  
 Loyola University Chicago

## How Do I Create an Anchor Chart?

Anchor charts are those homemade posters that teachers create with tips for students. You might see anchor charts hanging in a classroom that include the steps for doing long division, when to use an apostrophe, or the parts of a complete sentence. Anchor charts are usually written on large post-it notes.

Every sentence needs...

- \*a capital letter at the beginning
- \*an end mark at the end
- \*to make sense!

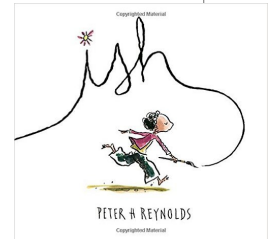
The key to an anchor chart is to keep it simple: choose a skill, strategy, or routine your students need extra support. Pick 3-5 steps or items that are important about that skill, strategy, or routine. Imagine in your head what the poster will look like. Then bring the topic to the students. Together with your students, create the poster. You know what you want it to look like, so only write what you know needs to go on the poster. Remember to keep it simple, with only 3-5 ideas.

Leave the poster up while you are learning that concept. You might take a picture and print it to distribute to students so they always have access to it. (This is especially important if your class switches to other classrooms.)

# Book Recommendations

## *Ish* by Peter Reynolds

Ramon loved to draw. He drew everything, everywhere. Then his brother Leon laughed at his drawing. So Ramon quit drawing. But then his sister, Marisol, shares a secret with Ramon that renews his love of drawing.



This book is a great book to talk about bullying or using unkind words. It made me think of “whatsoever you do to the least of my people” from the gospel of Matthew.

**Read Aloud** for all ages

**Independent Reading Level:** grade 2

**Genre** realistic fiction

## *El Deafo* by Cece Bell

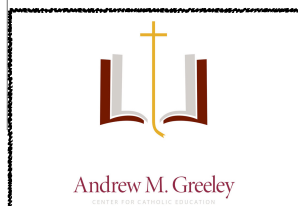
*El Deafo* is a memoir written by Cece Bell. It shares her story of growing up with a hearing impairment, what technology she used to hear, and her struggles with friends and others understanding how she is like them in all ways but her hearing. This book is at times laugh-out-loud funny and a tear-jerker at other times. The graphic novel format is easy to read and reads quickly.



**Reading Level** grade 5

**Appropriate for** grades 3-8

**Genre** memoir (autobiographical)



### Greeley Center Mission

**We are Catholic educators who challenge Catholic schools to be excellent because they are essential in preparing students for the future.**