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How Can Mentor Texts be Used to Teach Students in a Second Grade Classroom?

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HOW CAN MENTOR TEXTS BE USED TO TEACH STUDENTS IN A SECOND

GRADE CLASSROOM?

by

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful family, thank you for your support, patience, and tolerance for the many long nights and weekends of homework and writing. Special thanks to my husband, Mark, who has been my sounding board, editor, cheerleader, and the best co-parent while I was busy writing. I could not have done this without your love and support!

"Teach your students real-world writing purposes, add a teacher who models his or her struggles with the writing process, throw in lots of real-world mentor texts for students to emulate, and give our kids the time necessary to enable them to stretch as writers."
- Kelly Gallagher

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CHAPTER ONE

"One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."

-Malala Yousafzai

Introduction

Browse the shelves of any bookstore or search favorite topics on Amazon.com and you will find hundreds, if not thousands, of children's books available. The number of new authors and illustrators is amazing. As a result old favorites are discarded from school and public libraries to make room for the immense volume of new books filling their shelves. Teachers have a similar array of books at their fingertips to teach the required standards. Instead of selecting one of these new books each time we introduce a teaching concept, what if we simply selected some of our favorites--quality picture books that could be used to teach the majority of a literature, informational text, and writing standards; as well as many of the science and social studies standards? Would focusing on fewer texts allow students to really dig deeper into ideas of the author's purpose, make inferences, and understand the craft of writing? These questions led to the research question, *How can mentor texts be used to teach students in a second grade classroom?*

In this chapter, I share how my journey in education has been shaped by my early literacy experiences and my professional experiences that led to my interest in mentor texts as a focus for my project.

My Journey

A Reader is Born

My journey to this project began many years ago, before I was even aware of how important language and reading were in my life. Print and the written word were abundant in my life: books, magazines, lists my mom made with little doodles, the newspaper from local towns (three of them actually) as well as newspapers from Minneapolis and Duluth. I do not actually remember learning to read or write, but know that somewhere along the way I started reading all the time. I recall one summer in particular, checking out stacks of juvenile romance novels from our local library. Because I was a tween, my mom would read them to see what I was reading, and it took her very little time since she was such a fast reader. Even now, she is still a voracious reader and will choose to read over most other household tasks. She not only reads a great deal, but on most occasions, she will gift me with a book--almost always picture books as she knows I employ them in my classroom regularly. Likewise, I too, still read as much as life allows, listening to audiobooks when life is too busy to read an actual book.

Professional Inspiration and Rationale

With my love of books firmly solidified in my personal life, their importance in my professional life is not surprising. The majority of my college methods courses focused on using picture books in each lesson we taught. Literature was the foundation for everything: science, math, social studies, and of course, reading and writing concepts.

In my thirteen years of teaching, seven of them have been in the role as a Title I teacher where I worked with kids who were below grade level in reading. I often took small groups out of the classroom and used various interventions with them, helping them improve their reading skills. Using a read aloud to introduce a concept is beneficial for all students, but it is especially important for those who are reading below grade level or need guidance to comprehend a text. When we read books out loud with our students, we are asking questions, discussing vocabulary, noticing text structure, analyzing illustrations, and summarizing what we've read; we may do this without realizing what rich conversations we are having with our students about that text. All this teaching and learning can happen with thoughtful planning when we share picture books with our students. With each reading of the same text, students become more familiar with the characters, the plot line; they have the ability to memorize bits of the text, remembering what comes on the next page, noticing the details in the illustrations, talking about the text structure, and finding great pleasure in sharing and discussing the text. Especially for students who are reading below grade level, the benefits of these repeated readings may be enormous, because they now have another book they can add to their repertoire of books that they 'know.' There may not be many books they can read independently, but these texts--the ones they have heard three, four, five times--these are books they can confidently take off the shelf and 'read.'

This past school year, I used mentor sentences--a sentence from a read aloud that we examine closely--every week to teach grammar concepts to my students. I read a picture book to my students and examine one sentence from that text to look at parts of

speech, punctuation, and craft. This was an extremely positive practice in my classroom; we enjoyed the discussion of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. We spent time with the sentence each day--noticing things about it; labeling parts of speech; revising the sentence; and finally, imitating the sentence's structure to create our own sentence. Sharing and enjoying the 'new' sentences with each other and families was always a highlight of the process each week.

Another idea was presented this year that made me evaluate the use of read alouds and how I use them in my classroom. My school district delegated the literacy coaches from each building to receive training from the Literacy Collaborative at Ohio State University. While our literacy coaches were not doing formal training in their roles, we did have many discussions surrounding literacy. One compelling conversation was about reading fewer books with our students. Instead of reading a new book or two each day, read fewer books throughout the week and go deeper with those texts. For me, this simple suggestion made me think about how I was already using a read aloud to teach grammar and writing concepts. The idea of multiple readings of a text made me think about how I could be more intentional with read alouds in my classroom. Instead of reaching for a new book to teach a writing or literacy concept, we could come back to that comfortable book with the characters we already know and love to learn about the craft of writing or apply a comprehension strategy.

Unbeknownst to me, the foundation of using literature for teaching that was laid in my college methods classes paved the way for my capstone project. My previous work with struggling learners has influenced my current practice of using literature to teach

grammar and writing. The professional conversations with colleagues surrounding

mentor texts are what solidified my desire to ask: *How can mentor texts be used to teach*

students in a second grade classroom?

Conclusion

My love for reading combined with my passion to use authentic literature as much

as possible in my teaching has inspired me to develop a resource for teachers to help

them focus on a smaller number of mentor texts to use for teaching english language arts

(ELA) concepts, as well as some science and social studies standards, over the course of

the year. By utilizing a smaller number of texts, teachers allow their students to develop

greater familiarity with those texts. This will then allow students to explore complex

concepts and ideas more comfortably. These texts become mentors--those from which

we come back to time and time again for new learning.

Chapter one described how my personal and professional journey led me to

pursue a project focused on mentor texts. In chapter two, I will review the literature on

mentor texts which includes the definition of what a mentor text is, and how teachers can

evaluate and select mentor texts to use in their classrooms. Best teaching practices in

teaching ELA concepts is addressed, while the last section in the chapter focuses on how

mentor texts can be used in the classroom in content areas, reading, and writing. In

chapter three, I will describe the resource I have developed for my project and share

which texts and skills/strategies were selected. I will explain the rationale for the chosen

project format and share the timeline of the project. Chapter four will include reflections

of the capstone process, learning experienced, implications and limitations of the project.

CHAPTER 2

"If we are sharing aloud great books that catch children in a carefully spun web of words,

we can never read fast enough to satisfy them, and isn't that *grand*?"

-Katie Wood Ray, Wondrous Words

Introduction

Teachers will often say that there is not enough time in the day to do all that needs

to be done. Thinking about all teachers can (or should) be doing to meet the varying

needs of each student is one of the biggest challenges teachers face. One thing they can

do every day to help all students is to use engaging read alouds. The texts used for these

read alouds will be the base for so much learning that occurs in the classroom. These

books will be ones teachers come back to time and time again--they will become mentor

texts--to teach a myriad of concepts in classrooms. This idea of using one text to teach

many concepts is what led to the research question, *How can mentor texts be used to*

teach students in a second grade classroom?

This chapter addresses many themes connected to mentor texts and their use in

elementary classrooms. In the first section, the term mentor texts is defined. This is an

important piece of the conversation as many people use the term 'mentor text' but it does

not always carry the same meaning. How different experts evaluate and select mentor

texts is examined. There are many commonalities among their approaches, but some

differences as well. In the second section, the research behind best teaching practices,

examples of them, and how the use of mentor texts support those best practices will be explained. Mentor texts can be used in a variety of contexts in the classroom, therefore the last section addresses this. This section starts with mentor text use in content areas (science and social studies), then move into reading and writing (which includes grammar).

<div align="center">**Mentor Texts**</div>

"If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again there is no use in reading it all."

<div align="center">-Oscar Wilde</div>

Definition

Mentors are people whom we can look to for guidance and advice. They help us grow and learn. There are many ways to identify the term mentor texts. Most often the term is used in the context of teaching writing. Shubitz (2016) describes mentor texts being "samples of exemplary writing we can study during writing workshops" (p. 3). Dorfman and Cappelli (2017) have an excellent section in their book, *Mentor Texts, Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6* describing mentor texts. When looking at using an author's work to learn from, we look to that author as someone who can help us try something new in our own writing. With guidance from teachers, students can learn to examine works of writing for examples of the craft that they may want to try in their own writing. Dorfmann and Cappelli describe mentor texts as, "pieces of literature that we can return to again and again as we help our young writers learn how to do what they may not yet be able to do on their own" (p. 6). Fountas and Pinnell (2017) define mentor texts as "books or other texts that serve as examples of

excellent writing. Mentor texts are read and reread to provide models for literature discussion and student writing" (p. 655). Hoyt (2007) considers mentor texts "exemplary children's classics and strong nonfiction texts" (p. 3). In *Poetry Mentor Texts*, Dorfman and Cappelli (2012) define mentor texts as "a piece of writing...that you can return to many time in the course of a year and for many reasons" (p. 8). In an interview on the National Writing Project Radio (2013), Dorfman defines mentor texts as

> pieces of literature that you—both teacher and student—can return to and reread for many different purposes. They are texts to be studied and imitated...Mentor texts help students to take risks and be different writers tomorrow than they are today. It helps them to try out new strategies and formats.

With the idea that a mentor is someone we learn from and the descriptions of mentor texts from experts, let's settle on the definition of a mentor text as: a text we return to time and time again. It is a text we can learn from in a variety of ways and within various contexts: writing, reading, science, or social studies. Mentor texts are not just fiction books. They could be poems, nonfiction books, songs, articles, comics, or even digital media like speeches. Whatever our mentor text is, it will guide us to new learning and push us to try something new and different.

Mentor texts should not be confused with anchor texts. There are some teacher authors who refer to mentor texts as anchor texts (Ballew, 2018). Anchor texts have an important but different role in classrooms. Berger (as cited in McCarty, 2015) explains that when a teacher is conducting a unit of study, their anchor text is the one that all other texts revolve around. McCarty (2015) made a nice comparison of that anchor text being

the "sun" that all the other texts you use for teaching in that unit revolve around. Both

McCarty (2015) and Areaux (2016) describe novels being their anchor text in teaching a

unit. Although anchor texts are equal to mentor texts in their level of complexity and

engagement for students, this slight but significant difference is an important distinction

to make in the discussion of mentor texts. Based on the research, anchor texts are used

more frequently in middle to upper grade classrooms where the teaching of concepts in

units is more common (McCarty, 2015; Areaux, 2016). Mentor texts, on the other hand,

are more likely to be utilized in primary and middle grade classrooms; and are more

regularly used in teaching writing.

Evaluation and Selection

How does one choose mentor texts for their classroom? This can be a simple or

complex process. Laminack (2017) challenges us to not get sucked into ready-made lists

of mentor texts divided by craft moves, text features, text types, etc. This seems very

neat and easy, but he argues that readers must get to know their mentor texts--first

reading it as a reader and then examining it more closely as a writer. Teachers, he says,

should be the bridge between students and mentor texts. Teachers are the actual mentors

and should be modeling the craft moves in our own writing. We can use our collection of

mentor texts to show examples of these craft moves. He suggests starting with around

five books and over time, really get to know those books and the lessons they have to

teach both us and our students. Laminack (2017) cautions using ready-made lists and

simply adopting these texts as mentor texts. True mentor texts, according to him, are

'best friend books.' They are books that we know well, and understand *why* an author

used a craft move from a reader's perspective. This insight helps us as writers when we are making our own choices about composing text.

Dorfman and Cappelli (2017) have a number of selection guidelines for mentor texts as well. First, you as the teacher must connect to and love the book (enjoy book as a reader). Then the teacher will need to go through the book to find examples of writer's craft they might teach students (read the book like a writer). Next, ask how it serves students' needs or connects with teaching requirements. Will students connect with it somehow? Can this text be used to teach multiple purposes? Dorfman and Cappelli (2017) suggest starting small, with a few texts you love (p. 284). When introducing the text to students, first it will be shared as a read-aloud (p. 9), and then over the course of the year, these texts are revisited through the "eyes of a writer."

Shubitz (2016) has a chapter in *Craft Moves* explaining how to choose mentor texts. First, she chooses books she loves, and reads for pleasure first. After she falls in love with a book, she asks herself if the book has something she can use to teach her students about writing. If it does, she reads it a second time. This time around, she is reading like a writer. She is noticing language, text structure, and voice. The third time she reads the book, Shubitz uses sticky notes to indicate the craft moves she could teach her students. She indicates a page number and the craft move. To ensure she has found all the craft moves a text has to offer, she might read it several times with just this purpose in mind. Her next step is to sort her sticky notes by craft move and find those that appear at least two places in the book. She then starts documenting all the craft moves found in the text, along with their page numbers. She basically creates a

mini-lesson, including explanations, examples, and where and how she might need to support inexperienced writers (p. 8-11).

There are many parallels between these three approaches to choosing mentor texts. Dorfman and Cappelli (2017) and Shubitz (2016) suggest that teachers first choose texts that they love. You, the teacher, must have a connection to the text as a reader. That is, while you are reading it, you are enjoying the process of reading the text. All authors (Laminack, 2017; Dorfman & Cappelli, 2017; Shubitz, 2016) also use the language of "reading like a writer." Katie Wood Ray (1999) gives Frank Smith credit for the term "reading like a writer" from his book *Joining the Literacy Club* (1988). Reading like a writer, according to Ray (1999), has five parts:

1. *Notice* something about the craft of the text.

2. *Talk* about it and *make a theory* about why a writer might use this craft.

3. Give the craft a *name.*

4. Think of *other texts* you know. Have you seen this craft before?

5. Try and *envision* using this craft in your own writing (120).

First the teacher must have a connection to a text, and have some idea about what types of craft or conventions they would like to teach their students with that text. Next, you share the book with your students as a reader, through a read aloud. Then, when ready, you share the text with them again as a writer. Ray (1999) points out that our students must see themselves as a writer in order to view text through a writer's eye. She tells a story of a seamstress going shopping, and how the seamstress is looking at inseams and stitching, turning clothing inside out. She was looking at how the clothes were made--she

was getting ideas for new clothes *she* could make (p. 13). Writers are the same way--they examine writing inside and out, getting ideas to use in their own writing. Instilling in students the belief that they are writers, and then teaching them to examine text from a *writer's* viewpoint is key to helping them grow as writers. When you (as the teacher) and your students find mentors you love, using those mentors you know so well will undoubtedly help you become a better writer. And when you are ready to try something new, you will find a new mentor to help you grow and stretch in other ways.

<div align="center">**Best Teaching Practices**</div>

Research and Examples

    Reading. How does the use of mentor texts in a classroom fit into best teaching practices? According to Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2012), one of the qualities of best practice in teaching reading is to read aloud. They recommend this as a daily practice, for all grade levels (through high school). Another best practice they cite is getting kids to read--anything. Zemelman et al., (2012) also mention giving readers opportunities for success. Using a text as a read aloud gives students the opportunity to read it themselves--by retelling if they cannot read all the words--on their own. A text that was previously inaccessible by a student is now something they can read. The more times we revisit a text, the more likely these struggling learners will feel successful when interacting with the text. These mentor texts are becoming like friends--they are familiar and comfortable.

    Modeling reading is another best practice Zemelman et al. (2012) cite. When teachers choose mentor texts they love and are passionate about sharing with their

students, their enthusiasm comes through, and students get excited about books and reading them. How teachers use mentor texts in their classrooms vary, but many teachers who come back to a text are using it for a specific purpose. Therefore, the best practices of naming and teaching reading strategies directly; "supporting readers before, during, and after reading; helping children use reading as a tool for learning; giving kids daily opportunities to talk about their reading; replacing workbooks with authentic activities;" and providing writing experiences at all grade levels (Zemelman et al., 2012, p. 110-111) are often practices that are used when a teacher is using mentor texts in their classroom. Not every teacher will use mentor texts the same way, therefore it is not fair to say all these best practices are used in conjunction with mentor texts, but many teachers who effectively use mentor texts are integrating the above mentioned best practices into their classrooms.

Writing. Best practices in writing that Zemelman et al. (2012) include: "show students how writing is created, lead students to learn the craft of writing, and teach grammar and mechanics in context" (p. 142-143). All three of these are done with mentor texts. When we share mentor texts with our students and examine it as a writer, we are exploring the craft of writing and how it is made. Anderson's *Mechanically Inclined* (2005) connects grammar theory with practical instruction techniques. *Patterns of Power* (Anderson, 2017) gives elementary teachers a model for how this can work in their classrooms. By using mentor texts and mentor writers (including the teacher and maybe other students) in our classrooms, we can use the best practice of supporting growth in writing for English language learners (ELLs). Dorfman and Cappelli (2017)

discussed the idea of borrowing or imitating from other authors. They cited Oliver's work (1994) where she talks about how we learn everything by imitation. She encourages imitation to learn something well rather than "partially and haphazardly" (p. 13). They also bring up Lancia's term "literary borrowing." Using literature as a model in his classroom allowed his writers to be successful. The process of learning about how and why our mentors use craft or conventions in various ways is an excellent learning tool for English language learners. It allows them the freedom to imitate and borrow as needed as they progress through learning our complex language.

Bromley (2011) shared important considerations in best practices in writing instruction. There are many theories that contribute to these best practices. Cambourne's (1988, cited by Bromley) model includes authentic engagement accompanied by immersion and demonstration. Bromley (2011) summarizes his thinking "Students learn to write when they are surrounded with examples and models, given expectations, allowed to make decisions and mistakes, given feedback, and allowed time to practice in realistic ways" (p. 296). Social interaction around a shared experience is a key component of the language experience approach. Talking and sharing around a shared experience (shared reading of a text) helps strengthen students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills (Bromley, 2011, p. 296-297). Establishing a positive writing community as well as calling students "authors" helps create a positive writing environment where all students feel successful. Giving students intentional instruction in writing as well as teaching them the writing process are also best practices in teaching writing (Bromley, 2011, p. 296, 303). Using mentor texts to help students learn about

author's craft as well as conventions in writing is a great way to implement these best practices. Many experts in the field of writing support a workshop model. This model includes minilessons, independent writing time, and writing conferences. Writing conferences take place during independent writing time. It is during these conferences when teachers can teach additional strategies and help students set goals for their writing. Students write on self-selected topics during writer's workshop, but this format can be flexible and perhaps not take place daily.

Literacy Instruction. Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2011) listed ten evidence-based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction. One of those is to give students authentic purposes for reading and writing. When teachers use picture books to teach reading and writing (or other) concepts, they are using real books to help teach writing concepts or reading strategies. Mentor texts are often used to teach these concepts, as they are texts students are already familiar with. Other best practices they discussed: provide students with high-quality literature and use multiple texts that link concepts (Gambrell et al, 2011). When high-quality picture books are used for mentor texts, we are exposing our students to rich vocabulary and storytelling. Research supports the use of high-quality literature (Gambrell et al., 2011, p. 24).

Nonfiction text. Additionally, nonfiction text should be included in classrooms. Nonfiction books make excellent mentor texts for teaching nonfiction text features as well as connecting to content area concepts. Gambrell et al. (2011) say "Presenting new information through a variety of related texts offers multiple opportunities for students to attach new knowledge to their existing and developing schemas on a topic" (p. 25).

Introducing science or social studies concepts via a nonfiction informational or nonfiction narrative text has many benefits and can act as a base on to which students build information about a specific topic as well as how nonfiction text is written.

Classroom collaboration. The last two best practices that Gambrell et al. (2011) discuss that connect to the use of mentor texts are: "build a whole-class context that emphasizes community and collaboration" (p. 26) and "balance teacher- and student-led discussions of text" (p. 27). Using mentor texts to learn from allows students and teachers to notice and discuss so many things: craft, conventions, comprehension strategies, illustrations, vocabulary, language use, and even content area concepts. These discussions allow students and the teacher alike to share, notice, and learn together. Often, students have observations about a book that teachers have not made themselves. Discussions and shared learning around a shared text contribute to the above mentioned best practices by supporting student-led discussion (either with the whole class or even teachers or peers in small groups or conferences). Teachers should be aware of the types of text and literacy that students are exposed to at home to ensure they are including a variety of texts that students can personally connect with (Gambrell et al., 2011, p. 26).

Balance in literacy instruction. Madda, Griffo, Pearson, and Raphael (2011) have discussed the importance of balance in our literacy programs, acknowledging "there is a broad range of skills, strategies, genres, and contexts that must be considered in a complete literacy curriculum--and a finite amount of time in which teachers have to teach it" (p. 41). We must be sure that we are exposing our students to high-quality texts and that they are able to read and respond to these texts (Madda et al., 2011, p. 49). Using

these types of texts as mentor texts allows us to model and scaffold skills students must possess.

Struggling readers. Allington (2011) addresses best practices for struggling readers, pointing out as Zemelman et al. (2012) did as well, that these students need high-success reading and writing activities. Allington (2011) shares what a day in an exemplary first grade classroom looks like. On this day, *Over In the Meadow* by Ezra Jack Keats is read with the class. The teacher has a prereading activity to help build their schema, and as she reads she discusses vocabulary. After reading she connects math and a retelling activity and includes phonics where appropriate. The students engage in a writing activity about their favorite baby animal (there are lots of animals mentioned in the book). The next day, prior to going on a walk in a meadow, students revisit their prereading activity from the day before in which they envisioned the sights and smells of a meadow. On their walk, they write down their observations on a clipboard, writing about those observations when the return to the classroom (Allington, 2011, p. 102-106). This one mentor text was the basis for many activities in the classroom. Many strategies to help struggling readers have been used: building schema, discussing vocabulary, success with writing and reading. In addition, it has been connected to other content areas: math and science. This text would be easy to revisit later in the year to teach a specific skill or strategy the teacher wanted to address--as her students likely have a strong connection with the text already.

English Language Learners (ELL's). When addressing the needs of ELLs, the use of mentor texts can be supportive of best practices that include properly scaffolded

reading instruction and well-chosen text that students can easily revisit (Carlo &

Bengochea, 2011, p. 121). Additionally, vocabulary instruction for ELL students can be

supported through the use of mentor texts since the vocabulary is taught in context (Carlo

& Bengochea, 2011, p. 125). Often, teachers use the vocabulary in read alouds as the

basis for their vocabulary instruction. Read alouds help all students go beyond their

existing vocabulary and gives them opportunities to learn new words (Blachowicz and

Fisher, 2011, p. 227).

Benefit to Struggling Learners

Why is using mentor texts in your classroom so important for struggling

learners--those who read or write below grade level, or those whose primary language is

not English? Moser (2017) pointed out that when she uses familiar picture books with

her sixth graders, a writing strategy feels more accessible to them. They are able to see

how they could use the same approach in their own writing after having a lesson on how

it was used in a familiar picture book. Picture books are especially beneficial for

struggling learners. As Harvey and Goudvis (2007) and Hoyt (2007) mentioned, the

pictures go with the text so those who perhaps cannot read the words can still access

meaning from the text via the pictures. They went on to note the number of nonfiction

text features--diagrams, illustrations, bold print, italics, photographs, etc.--support

struggling learners in gaining information when reading nonfiction books. These two

ideas also benefit non-native speakers as well. The illustrations and photographs give

them background knowledge about a topic they may be unfamiliar with. Harvey and

Goudvis (2007), along with others (Premont et al., 2017; Alexander, 2011), support the

idea of intermediate teachers modeling the use and love of picture books in their classrooms. They argue that kids will choose picture books if they see their teachers reading them aloud. This helps the stigma that picture books are for non-proficient readers. When we read aloud to kids, we are eliminating the need for our students to decode--they can just focus on the language, patterns, and storyline, which aids in their comprehension of the text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Premont, Young, Wilcox, Dean and Morrison (2017) found in their study of struggling 10th grade writers that the use of picture books sparked their students' interest in writing. They concluded that the use of picture books as mentor texts increased students' writing abilities and increased engagement.

Mentor Texts in the Classroom

"Make it a rule never to give a child a book you would not read yourself."

George Bernard Shaw

Content Areas

The use of mentor texts in content areas can benefit both teachers and students. Pytash and Morgan (2014) cite the benefits of using mentor texts in writing in the content areas of science and social studies. One purpose they discuss is that students are exposed to the type of writing used in a specific discipline. They get firsthand opportunities to see how authors in those disciplines "use language to craft their message and how they structure their texts" (Pytash & Morgan, 2014, p. 94). Writing in content areas can be tricky, but by using mentor texts, students see the variety of ways authors share information and helps them be a better writer. In addition, teachers in a building teaching

different content areas can teach writing in a consistent way if they all use mentor texts to teach writing. Students would be used to seeing how text is structured and the craft decisions that authors in different disciplines use if all teachers use mentor texts to teach writing within their discipline.

Pytash and Morgan (2014) suggested selecting a mentor text with strong writing and that is of approximately the same length as the work that students will be producing. It helps students see concrete examples so they get a solid idea of style, tone, and approaches that different authors take when writing in that particular content area/discipline. Teachers should guide students in a process of active noticing that focuses on structure of the text--how information is presented; as well the language that authors use to convey their ideas. Paying attention to language helps students see how academic language is used in their particular content area, which in turn helps students have a deeper understanding of the vocabulary related to that discipline. Pytash and Morgan (2014) point out that by supporting our students in examining text this way we set them up for success for the future,

> The gift of being able to analyze writing is that students can begin to feel more comfortable with other writing assignments because they know they can gather examples of what they need to write and study them carefully before beginning their own writing (p. 96).

When it comes to using mentor texts to support reading in the content areas, many of the benefits mentioned previously that support struggling readers are also applicable to content areas. Alexander (2011) says that because expository text makes up the bulk of

what students will read, we need to teach kids how to read and process it. High-quality

nonfiction mentor texts are a great way to engage readers and "level the playing field of

content-area reading" (Alexander, 2011, p. 17).

In order to successfully help students to access all that nonfiction text has to offer,

it is important to ensure that teachers use before-, during-, and after-reading strategies

with their students. Before-reading strategies can help give students valuable background

knowledge that can help them with comprehension of the text. Giving students a purpose

for reading will give them a focus for their reading. Predicting and visualizing are two

good pre-reading strategies teachers could use. Teachers should also use during-reading

strategies to help students comprehend the text. Questioning is a during-reading strategy

where students write down questions they have about the text as they are reading. As a

teacher is reading a text, they can employ the strategy of thinking aloud. This is

modeling what might be going through one's mind while reading the text--the teacher

actually verbalizes these thoughts as they are reading aloud to their class. This can help

keep students engaged but more importantly, model to students what is happening inside

our heads as we are reading--it shows them that we are constantly thinking as we are

reading. After-reading strategies are important because they are where students can show

us their ability to "evaluate predictions, reflect on what they read and connect writing to

reading" (Alexander, 2011, p. 25). Retelling and using text evidence to support answers

are two great after-reading strategies that allow students to show what they know.

Alexander (2011) says that these different strategies (before-, during-, and after-reading)

provide enough scaffolding to allow all students to be successful with content-area picture books.

Reading

As discussed in the definitions section of this chapter, the term "mentor texts" is typically found in the context of teaching writing. So then, what do we call mentor texts when we are teaching reading concepts? When teachers share a book with students by reading it out loud, we call it a read aloud. Engaging the students in the text in an intentional way, using the read aloud to connect to a specific standard raises it to an *interactive read aloud* (Hoyt, 2007). Hoyt (2007) advocates for three read alouds a day: one fiction, one nonfiction, and one very short piece for the appreciation of the "art" of writing. She argued that this last type of read aloud can take place during transition times and be a poem or a carefully crafted paragraph. She tells her students that she is "going to share something beautiful with them" so she asks them to be quiet (p. 2). The other two read alouds--fiction and nonfiction--are necessary to achieve balance in what we expose our students to. Hoyt (2007) says that "we must expose our children to the language forms and structures of these two highly diverse text forms" (p. 2).

During an interactive read aloud, we help our students learn: how print works, how illustrations contribute to the meaning of a text, shared language for discussing text, about literary elements, build vocabulary, about genre and the different elements of each one, how reading sounds out loud (fluency), the craft of writing, and strategies for their own writing (Hoyt, 2007, p. 2). So, how does this happen by simply reading a book aloud? When we conduct an interactive read aloud, the text is chosen with intention--we

are using it to teach a standard, concept, type of craft--we are using it so students can learn something from it. When teachers share an interactive read aloud, they are often using the during-reading strategy Alexander (2011) mentioned, thinking aloud. This means that a teacher is sharing their observations, what they are thinking. These thoughts and pauses are purposeful and might include comments about language choice, illustrations, vocabulary, the setting, or humor. Another strategy teachers might use during an interactive read aloud is turn and talk. A teacher stops reading at a predetermined spot in the text and asks an intentional question for the students to turn and talk to their neighbor about. The teacher might listen in to a particular group, finding examples they would like shared aloud with the class. Then the whole class would stop their partner conversations and bring their attention to the whole group again, with the teacher guiding the discussion of the question students were discussing. She might ask certain students to share based on her listening in on their conversations. After the question had been discussed, the teacher would continue reading from the book, stopping like this one to two more times throughout the reading of the text.

Harvey and Goudvis (2007) described a think aloud, turn and talk, as well as many other strategies to aid in reading comprehension in their book *Strategies that Work*. They explained that thinking aloud is used in many of the instructional practices they describe. Hence, they gave a nice visual to describe thinking aloud, "Our definition of thinking aloud means that we peel back the layers of our thinking, show kids how we approach text, and make visible how understanding happens in a variety of reading contexts" (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007, p. 45). Their tips for teaching the strategy of

thinking aloud are: share inner conversation, model how background knowledge (schema) is activated and connected to the text, share questions, share inferences, verbally share confusing parts and demonstrate strategies to clarify, and share how we find the important information in the text.

Harvey and Goudvis (2007, p. 48) mentioned read alouds, but also have the same view that Hoyt (2007) does--not every book should be read to teach something. Not only do we need to balance the reading of fiction and nonfiction, but we need to balance the *purpose* of read alouds to ensure that at times we are reading for the pure enjoyment of it. When it comes to interactive read alouds, Harvey and Goudvis (2007, p. 48) give these as the steps: activate background knowledge; modeling; guided practice; and share thinking.

The strategy of of lifting text that Harvey and Goudvis (2007, p. 49) have described really utilizes the idea of a mentor text being used repeatedly. Lifting text means that you are lifting a short piece of text to examine closely (also commonly called a close read). Students would have their own copy of the text as well as a shared copy projected so the teacher can model how they navigate understanding the text.

Revisiting the think aloud, Harvey and Goudvis (2007, p. 49-50) described how a think aloud can turn into a guided discussion that helps students develop their thinking. Inviting students to respond to a specific question, turn and talk, and then as the teacher, helping students connect and build on each other's thinking to facilitate a focused conversation is what guided discussion is all about. Teaching students to listen to their

peers and not go off on a tangent, or to ask follow-up questions are important components of guided discussion.

Anchor charts are an effective way for teachers to remind students of their learning from a mentor text. Anchor charts provide a record of the teaching and learning that has taken place in our classroom. When we create anchor charts, we do so with our students--their thinking is recorded on them. These charts can help us with strategies, content, or genre. They make the thinking from a lesson concrete and therefore easily accessible in the future (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007, p. 50-51). We can come back to them to say, "Remember when we read about. . .". Students can go back to the chart again and again to remind themselves of past learning and thinking and then build on that thinking.

All of the strategies that Harvey and Goudvis (2007) discussed are connected to read alouds and can easily be applied with mentor texts. Some of their strategies might take place the first time a text is read (think aloud, turn and talk, guided discussion) while other strategies like lifting text and anchor charts would be more suitable to a repeated reading of the text. One important point is that when we consider a text a mentor text, it's not essential to reread the entire text. Perhaps we are just rereading part of the text to support the strategy or skill we are focused on. Lifting text is a great example of revisiting text but not using the entire text for that teaching.

Debbie Miller (2013) has echoed many of the same ideas about read alouds that Hoyt (2007), Harvey and Goudvis (2007), and Alexander (2011) have focused on. Miller (2013) says when she does read alouds in September with her first graders, she models lots of things. She shares her thinking through making connections, asking questions, or

visualizing. She will teach all these strategies intentionally later in the year, but for now she is exposing her students to a model of what good readers do (Miller, 2013, p. 37). Miller (2013) also reads for pleasure, sharing chapter books with her students. Miller (2013) said, "Reading aloud is one of the most important things I do. [It] motivates kids to want to learn to read, extends their oral language, and gives them opportunities to connect new information to what they already know" (p. 37). She went into more detail about the benefits of read alouds which include: the modeling of thinking strategies, what fluent reading sounds like, building of background knowledge for what different genres and types of text look like, building community around a shared experience, exposure to new vocabulary, and sharing the love of reading with our students (Miller, 2013, p. 37).

Writing

Writing is the context is which the term mentor text is used most commonly. We have already learned about selection of engaging, high-quality texts to use as mentor texts in the evaluation and selection section of this chapter. When examining the use of mentor texts in writing there are two main ways they can be used. One way already mentioned is by using a mentor text to teach the craft of writing, which will be explored more in depth in this section. But first, another purpose for using mentor texts in writing will be investigated. The use of what is commonly called 'mentor sentences' is gaining popularity thanks to the work of Jeff Anderson. A mentor sentence is the use of a sentence from authentic text to teach grammar in context. In terms of what defines grammar, the English Oxford Dictionary says it is, "a particular analysis of the system and structure of language." Using this definition, we can include many components of

grammar: use of punctuation, sentence structure, writing conventions, and word choice. Anderson (2017) pushes us to think of grammar not in the context of being right or wrong, rather than patterns. He said, "Beyond ideas of absolute right and absolute wrong lives a classroom where writers thrive. To these writers, the conventions of language are patterns of power they use to shape meaning" (2017, p. 1). Anderson (2017) has a great visual in "Patterns of Power" that shows a bridge: reading is on one side, writing is on the other. The two pillars that hold up the bridge are comprehension and composition, with grammar being the bridge, which is supported by meaning. It is an excellent visual that helps teachers think about grammar as an important connecting piece between reading and writing (p. 7).

Anderson's (2017) approach to using authentic text to teach grammar starts with our academic standards. What do the standards for your grade level ask you to teach (Anderson, 2017, p. 18)? Breaking that standard down to what your students need to know and do will make it more manageable for the teacher to focus their intention. After the teacher has identified what they want students to focus on, the next step is to connect writing conventions to author's craft and purpose. Anderson (2017) asserts, "Author's purpose informs *why* writers do what they do, and writer's craft is *how* they do it" (p. 20). Examining one sentence from a text allows one to focus on why the author did what they did. Why did they include ellipses? Why were there quotation marks? How do we read a sentence differently when there is a question mark at the end of it? Authors choose patterns of power to make us read their writing in a certain way, and influences how we make meaning from the text (Anderson, 2017, p. 20).

Anderson (2017) believes the purpose of teaching grammar and conventions is to elevate students' writing (p. 20). He asserts that when students know the *why* behind conventions, they will understand the meaning of it, and therefore be able to transfer that knowledge to their own writing--they will be able to practice that craft (Anderson, 2017, p. 21). Now that the connection has been made between conventions and craft, a focus phrase needs to be identified. This phrase is essentially learning goal in the form of an "I" statement, such as "I capitalize proper nouns." This focus phrase or learning goal should not be introduced to students until after the convention has been used and seen in context. Next you will need to find a sentence that uses your learning goal. Choosing a sentence from a text that you have used previously, or intend to use later in the year reinforces the idea of using mentor texts. It is also beneficial if that text is one that students enjoy and many read for pleasure. The last step of the process is the invitation process. Anderson (2017) suggests using only ten minutes a day for this process. He suggests an 8 day schedule that looks like this (p. 26):

Day	Invitation to . . .
1	Notice
2	Compare and Contrast
3	Imitate with Interactive or Shared Writing
4	Imitate as a Pair
5	Celebrate (Celebrating can be as simple as students reading their sentences aloud or displaying them on a document camera.)
6	Imitate Independently

7	Celebrate (Sharing on wall charts or class books could go on for more than a day.)
8	Edit

When the mentor sentence is displayed, the purpose for examining it is established. "This year we're going to look at great sentences and talk about what authors do to create beautiful meaning with their words and punctuation. We'll learn how to do it ourselves" (Anderson, 2017, p. 27). On Day 1, students are invited to share what they notice about the sentence. They might notice periods, capitals, quotation marks, special words, etc. Ideally, students will notice the convention that is the focus of the learning goal. On Day 2, the mentor sentence is displayed along with an imitation sentence that was created by the teacher in the planning process. Students collaborate with peers by looking at things that are the same and different about the two sentences. The focus phrase or learning goal should be referred to so students can make the connection between the goal ("I capitalize proper nouns") and seeing it used in authentic text (Anderson, 2017, p. 32).

Days 3 and 4 find writers imitating the sentence in a variety of ways. Teachers can scaffold the approaches based on their students' needs. On Day 3, the imitation can be a shared process between the class and teacher. In shared writing, Anderson (2017) says the teacher models, holding the pen and doing the writing. The creation of the imitation sentence is a shared process. Day 4 finds pairs of students imitating the sentence, though Anderson points out if you have more advanced learners you may skip the partner imitation and go right to independent imitation (2017, p. 35) on Day 6.

On Day 5, the classroom is celebrating students' work with sentences being read aloud and examined. Sentences can be displayed to continue celebration. Sentences can be shared with families via technology so they can share in the celebration process as well. Day 6 allows students to imitate independently, with Day 7 celebrating those sentences. Day 8 is where Anderson (2017) gives students the opportunity to see multiple versions of the mentor sentence. One of those versions is correct and the others have small mistakes in them. Anderson (2017) explains the process as learning and teaching more than testing. He reveals the correct version of the sentence and discusses with students what was learned from that author. After some discussion about the first, correct sentence, Anderson (2017) shares the sentence with one mistake or error. He does not ask kids to find that, instead he asks "What's changed?" (Anderson, 2017, p. 40). Each version of the sentence allows for conversation about the sentence and the craft and conventions used by the author. It allows an opportunity for students to show what they know in context--a teacher could easily use this as a formative assessment.

In this chapter mentor texts have been defined, and how to evaluate and select appropriate mentor texts to use in a classroom has been discussed. In the evaluation and selection section, experts guided us through the process of choosing mentor texts. Teachers should choose a text they love, and see what strategies they could use for teaching from that text. When they share the book with their students, it should initially be to enjoy as readers. They should enjoy the illustrations and the language. Then, a teacher could use the text to teach a concept, skill, or strategy. It is not necessary to read the entire text--just the part of the text that is necessary for teaching.

When using a text to teach writer's craft, it is important to read the text like a writer. As mentioned previously, Ray (1999) has a five part process to reading like a writer. The first step is to notice something about the text. Ray (1999) said that often, students will notice things about the text as a reader. She calls these observations "*readerly* things" (p. 121). She goes on to say "honor the response by naming it for the student as a readerly insight. The only way students will ever learn the difference between the two kinds of noticings is for you to name what they have said as 'readerly.'" (1999, p. 123) So teachers should really be guiding their students to notice "writerly" things about the text. This process will take time, but things students might notice include language choice, text structure, and illustrations--how they support the text as well as the medium, relationship to text, etc. As noticings are discussed, students and teachers should be analyzing each item--thinking about its place in the text, and why the author might have chosen the text to work the way it does. This step is making a theory about why the author used each craft in the way they did. Next in the process is to name the craft, if it doesn't have a name that you know. The naming allows for common language between all learners in the classroom. Short, descriptive terms are the best for naming craft. Examples might be "repeating key words" or "letter texts." (Ray, 1999, p. 124 & 153) If students bring up a craft and it has a name, but they do not know what to call it--alliteration, for example, this would be used as a perfect teaching opportunity to teach students the name for that type of technique. Once the craft has a name, it is time to make text to text connections and think about if anyone has noticed this type of craft in any other book (Ray, 1999, p. 125). In noticing these types of craft in writing, this is a

great opportunity to have an anchor chart in your classroom that you and students can add to as you give names to various craft techniques.

The last step in reading like a writer is to envision how this particular craft technique would look in our own writing. Brainstorming situations when a writer might want to use that technique will help students envision when they might want to use it. Ray (1999) suggests this language "So, if I am writing and I want to _____, then I can use this technique" (p. 127) for this discussion. A key part of this process is students owning the craft technique rather than referring back to the mentor text they originally saw it in. Students would call the craft by name rather than mentioning the mentor texts' title.

Many experts in the field of writing use the writer's workshop model, which includes a mini-lesson, time for independent writing and conferencing, and then sharing at the end. Mini-lessons should be planned to meet students' needs--the topics could be things teachers have noticed many writers doing, or it could be connected to a craft that teachers have seen students try out. Often times, students will need more than one exposure to a writing technique before they are ready to try it on their own. Modeling a strategy or sharing a students' writing is another way to expose students to a particular craft, and this can be done as another mini-lesson.

Summary

Using mentor texts to teach writing, reading, and content area concepts is a research-based best practice. This chapter has given an overview of the variety of ways that text can be used in various disciplines. Using high-quality texts that show strong

writing are valuable texts that students and teachers can come back to time and time again. When we continue to come back to these texts, they become familiar and comfortable, showing us ways we can stretch ourselves as learners.

Chapter three will describe the project and explain the reason for choosing a website/blog as the presentation of the project. Taking into account best practices of literacy education and how experts suggest mentor texts be utilized in the classroom, chapter three will describe how these factors influenced the project.

CHAPTER THREE

"Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic."

~J.K. Rowling

Project Description

Ask any teacher what their favorite children's books are, and it is likely they have a list of their favorites. Reading aloud and sharing books with kids is one of the best parts of the teaching day. Using those books intentionally to help teach vocabulary, grammar, reading strategies, or writing techniques that align with teaching standards led this teacher to ask: *How can mentor texts be used to teach students in a second grade classroom?*

The project overview section gives a brief overview of the project and provides information about the school setting in which the project takes place. The project description section tells about the rationale for the project and what research was taken into account to decide on the best format for the website.

Project Overview

The goal with this project was to choose high-quality texts that were able to be used to teach multiple concepts in a second grade classroom. Every text chosen was used to teach 2-3 concepts, standards, or strategies across the areas of reading, writing, grammar, science, or social studies. While the use of mentor texts is a regular practice in the classroom, teaching with them in a way the experts recommend is not as common. The experts suggest that teachers start with books that they personally love (Dorfman and

Cappelli, 2017; Shubitz, 2016). So for this teacher, the details of this project are personal

as the mentor text selected were based on personal preferences. However, in sharing the

results of this project, the hope was to inspire colleagues to be more intentional about the

use of mentor texts in their own classrooms. Since this teacher taught second grade, the

mentor texts used were targeting the Minnesota Academic Standards for second grade;

however, other grades would find the approach to using mentor texts easy to apply to

their own grade level. Hence, the target audience would be classroom teachers across a

variety of grade levels.

The setting in which this project took place is a second grade classroom in

Northern Minnesota. It was one of three sections of second grade, each section with

approximately 23 students. The students in this second grade classroom are mostly

caucasian, with about 25% qualifying for free or reduced lunch. On average,

approximately two students received special education services with another 4 having

received Title I services. The school was a K-4 building with approximately 380

students, one of four elementary schools in a district serving a small city of about 12,000

people.

Project Description

The mentor texts that were used throughout this project helped teach a variety of

concepts and standards, and they were shared with other teachers via a website,

specifically a blog. Several reasons were chosen for the blog format, rather than a

traditional website. Foremost, a blog would allow for comments and feedback from

readers--this interactive nature allows for the exchange of ideas. Second, a blog can be

continuously added to with posts that give more information, detailing what has been done differently year to year, but the original content does not have to be altered. In way of structure, there will be a new blog post approximately every two weeks focusing on one skill or strategy. Categories or labels will be added to each post so when people search the blog they are able to find all the posts that contain information about that particular topic. For example, if a teacher looked for ideas of books to teach quotation marks, they would find that label or category and all the blog posts related to "quotation marks" would come up. The rationale for choosing this structural format is that the experts suggest starting small (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2017; Laminack, 2017). By focusing on one strategy per post, teachers are able to think about the skill being taught, and give it a try with either the mentor text presented, or their own selection.

Blog posts are organized by date, which allows for fresh information to be shared. A static website has been more ideal for people who do not frequently have new information, or do not want to update that information often. A blogging platform does not require the knowledge of website programming or require additional software to use. The downside of the blog format relates to design. The blogger does not have much control over how the blog looks or how it is laid out. The downside to control over design, however, makes the blog accessible and benefits to using the blog are many.

Keeping in mind that the design, layout, and features included on a page are important for users, a couple of sources were consulted to help guide the decisions regarding those elements. According to Crestodina (n.d.) in *27 Research-Backed Web Design Tips: How to Design a Website That Works*, it is important that the headline on

the homepage include a descriptive keyphrase that helps the reader know they are in the right place. He also mentioned to avoid visual clutter--a clean design is more appealing and suggested following a standard layout format (typically how blogs are done anyway). These two things should be easy to achieve since a free blogging platform has limited layout options and color and design schemes to choose from.

Crestodina (*Research-Backed. . .*, n.d.) also mentions the importance of keeping information visible to readers. He encourages bloggers to keep content exposed rather than having multiple tabs for readers to click on. Most blogs have the categories and labels; as well as dates of blogs published, listed on the right hand side. Another one of Crestodina's 27 design tips that will be considered is his advice of "link to things that help the visitor reach their goals" (p. 34). This design tip can be more relevant to those who are blogging for income, but it is also an important consideration to be sure that whatever additional sites might be linked to are ones that readers will find useful in terms of using mentor texts in their classroom. The primary links will be to professional books about mentor text use in the classroom or actual picture books that teachers might use for mentor texts. The last valuable take-away from Crestodina (*Research-Backed. . .*, n.d) is that subheadings should be meaningful. When writing a blog post, keeping in mind that the title for each post is important to consider, it should communicate the topic being discussed but not be too long in length.

Based on David Hartshorne's blog post *WordPress Vs Blogger: Which Blogging Platform Is Right For You?* (n.d.), the decision was made to use Blogger for this blog. For this teacher's needs and level of blogging (casual & new), it was a good fit.

WordPress.com and Blogger were similar according to Hartshorne; however, because Blogger is connected to Google, it is more accessible since the author was already familiar with Google platforms. Also, one of the downsides that Hartshorne mentioned might actually be an advantage for teachers. He said that social sharing is geared more towards google+ than other social media sites (like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter). Many teachers have Google-based email through their school district, so it might be easier to reach the target audience. This teacher is comfortable and familiar with the other social media sites and would be comfortable sharing links to the blog posts on those sites.

The timeline for this project is Fall 2018. This includes 6 blog posts--the first two posts introduced mentor texts and described how to select them; and the next four shared teaching purposes for mentor texts. However, the use of mentor texts and the blog posts continued beyond this timeframe. For example, four different texts and one skill or strategy for each have been introduced on the blog. Those four texts will be used several more times throughout the year--those lessons have yet to be taught. Below is a table that shows which mentor texts have been used thus far, what concept was taught with each text, and future concepts that could be taught with each text. The process for choosing these mentor texts was not all that complex. Because mentor sentences are already in use, the texts used for this purpose were the first texts selected for consideration as a mentor text. This changes a bit from year to year, but for the most part has remained fairly consistent. Also taken into consideration are texts that are used for teaching reading comprehension strategies, social skills, or growth mindset lessons. The books

that fulfill these two purposes will be the texts examined for use in other skill or strategy

lessons. The blog can be found at: https://learningwithliterarymentors.blogspot.com/.

Each blog post (published and not yet published) is included in the appendix.

Mentor Text	Teaching Purpose	Other Teaching Purposes
Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes fiction	quotation marks	*beginning of the year community building (words have power/kindness) *vocabulary *mentor sentence (grammar focus: plural nouns) *craft: dialogue *craft: character details *story structure: beginning/middle/end; problem/solution *inferences
The Day the Crayons Quit by Drew Daywalt fiction	point of view	*mentor sentence (grammar focus: plural nouns) *text structure: friendly letter *craft: character details *craft: voice *craft: illustrations *figurative language: personification
What If You Had Animal Teeth? by Sandra Markle nonfiction	nonfiction text features (headings, sidebars, photographs & illustrations)	*mentor sentence (grammar focus: contractions) *craft: organization/text structure--how the information and illustrations are laid out on a page *craft/text structure: asking a question *craft: types of print (font)
Diary of A Worm, by Doreen Cronin fiction	speech & thinking bubbles	*perspective in illustrations *mentor sentence (grammar focus: compound words) *text structure: diary format *figurative language: personification

Having a blog is a way for the author to keep track of which books have been

used to teach certain concepts and standards throughout the year and is also a great

resource for other teachers to reference when selecting mentor texts.

Summary

To answer the question *How do mentor texts make reading and writing accessible

to all students?*, a blog has been created that shares skill or strategy lessons that can be

taught with a text. The goal is for each text to be used to teach between three and five

skills or strategies. This is a somewhat arbitrary range that is necessary to find the

balance between using a text multiple times to allow students to really get to know that

text and using a text too much so that students tire of it (Shubitz, 2016). Ideally, of

course, students would seek out mentor texts on their own and choose the authors they

personally connect with to guide their learning and push them to try new things.

Chapter Four will revisit the literature review, share limitations, challenges, and

implications of the project. It will also include the author's personal and professional

growth that resulted from the project.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Reading for me, is spending time with a friend."

– Gary Paulsen

Conclusions

Introduction

For my capstone project, I explored the idea of using mentor texts by asking the

question, *How can mentor texts be used to teach students in a second grade classroom?*

In this chapter I will revisit the literature review, citing the literature I found most

valuable to my project. Then I will share the challenges and limitations of the project.

Possible implications for my project will be discussed in the next section. Finally, I will

share my personal and professional growth experienced through the course of this

journey.

Literature Review Revisited

There were many components of the literature review that I connected with as a

teacher. Many strategies for using mentor texts are things I already use in my

professional practice. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2012) have a number of best

practices that I currently utilize on a regular basis: reading aloud, having kids read

anything, modeling reading, using authentic activities, and teaching grammar in context.

The best practice that Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2011) cite that I connect with the

most is using authentic purposes for reading and writing. Using workbooks and

worksheet is something I try to avoid in my classroom. I would much rather have my

students analyze and discuss elements from picture books that we have already read together in class. I try to do the same with writing: my students write books in writer's workshop rather than writing in a notebook or journaling. I find the purpose of writing books to be incredibly engaging for my students. They select their topics, how many pages their book is, the title, the illustrations, where they put their sentences on the page, what punctuation is used--all the decisions that authors must make. And of course, the decisions authors make aren't limited to those structural ones we see, but also craft decisions about things like word choice and text structure. I cannot think of a more authentic way for students to learn and show what they know about writing.

On a more philosophical level, I really connected with Laminack (2017), Dorfman & Cappell (2017), Shubitz (2016), and Ray (1999) in their belief about how mentor texts should be selected and introduced to students. These experts recommend that mentor texts first and foremost be books that teachers love, then teachers should share texts so students can enjoy them as a reader. After that, the text can be used for teaching--craft, grammar, science concepts, or comprehension strategies. The books I most enjoy sharing with my students are books that I have a personal connection to. Using literature to teach standards feels very natural to me, as this was the basis of my teacher education program. While I don't have control over all of the texts that I share with my students for teaching concepts, I do have control over many of them.

There were some ideas in the literature review that made me rethink my teaching practices. In a true workshop model, the teacher is modeling writing frequently, sharing their mistakes, revisions, and thinking as they progress through the writing process. This

is one thing I have not done as much as I should. In examining one's teaching practice, there are many things to consider, with time during the school day being one of the biggest hurdles to overcome. In order to model writing, I need to take something else out of my day or tweak my schedule. Refining the structure of my writer's workshop to include this component is a goal of mine; however I am also balancing the expectations of my district in terms of implementing a new language arts curriculum. Coming back to these experts and the research on best practices is grounding for me--the challenge I face is integrating these best practices fully. However, I fully believe in the workshop model of teaching writing, and it is my goal to continue refining my teaching practice to incorporate this important element of the writer's workshop.

Anderson's work with grammar and authentic text was also very enriching for me, since I am currently implementing some of these strategies in my classroom already. The routine I use is based on Anderson's research and I found reading his book (Patterns of Power, 2017) to really give depth to the 'why' and 'how' of the routines I currently use with my students. Relating these grammar routines to the craft of writing is presently missing in my teaching practice. Asking more questions to push students to examine the craft of writing when examining our mentor sentence is something I need to accomplish more frequently.

Challenges and Limitations

The biggest challenge when it comes to using mentor texts in a classroom is the mindset that an individual teacher has about mentor texts. Many teachers want a list of texts appropriate for teaching a given topic so they can quickly gather some books and

teach. However, these texts are really anchor texts--they are not truly mentor texts, as

mentioned in Chapter 2. Revisiting the definition of mentor texts really helps ground

teachers in what true mentor texts should be in our classrooms. A mentor text is a book

we come back to time and time again--for lessons on craft, text structure, ideas, word

choice--this book has more than one teaching context. Having teachers understand this

concept and apply it in their classrooms is something only they can decide to do, which is

certainly a challenge and limitation of this project.

Another limitation in this project revolves around content area texts. Typically,

most elementary teachers have a number of standards they must teach at their grade level

in science and social studies. Having their mentor texts be applicable to all of these

standards would be impossible, but to have them cover some standards is the content

areas is feasible. The idea of mentor texts with content area topics would be very

beneficial in the upper grades, especially focusing on using them as a model for writing.

As a teacher one of my biggest challenges is teaching the craft of writing,

consequently, I believe using mentor texts will help me improve how I teach writer's

craft in my classroom. This is where mentor texts are beneficial--if we only have a few

texts that are truly our mentors, we can focus on what we can learn from those texts (and

authors) and dig deep. We don't need to overwhelm ourselves with the many options for

teaching different components of writing. We can focus on the texts that are our mentors,

and use those to teach with. Simplifying our approach may make teachers and their

students more successful.

Possible Implications

As mentioned in the challenges section, thinking about how one views what a mentor text is can be the first stumbling block for true mentor text use in a classroom. It is impossible to know the impact that the written word has on others. But it is my hope that by sharing my journey with mentor texts that I will inspire other teachers to consider how they use mentor texts in their own classrooms. Creating my blog provides a place for educators to learn and grow in their teaching practice as it will provide a space where the practice of using mentor texts is discussed and analyzed. Examples of texts I've used, how I have used them, and how their use has influenced student work will be shared. I believe that reflecting on my own teaching practice while writing the blog posts will help me grow as a teacher. It is my intention to continue my blog after I have shared the results of my project. Having a creative outlet to share my professional musings on a topic I have great interest in will be beneficial for me to continue challenging myself professionally.

In terms of how my project and blog fit into the professional conversation on mentor texts, I feel that my perspective is beneficial in that I will be reflecting on and sharing how mentor texts are used in my classroom. Though my perspective is just one teacher's, my blog will provide an opportunity for other teachers to discuss their own use of mentor texts. Though I will find benefit from sharing my reflections, ultimately, it is my hope to aid other teachers in their own thinking and use of mentor texts. Reflection is the first step in change, and it is my hope that other teachers can change the way they

view mentor texts just as I have. In short, my blog will be one more way to have a conversation about mentor text use in the classroom.

Personal and Professional Growth

The journey of my master's degree has been a long one. I started this degree program as a part-time Title I teacher six years ago. My professional perspective and job changed from the beginning of my coursework to the end, thus I ended up changing topics and the direction I was going previously. This a perfect example of how many journeys are not linear--they are filled with detours that end up taking us on a different path than the one we originally planned. However, I feel that this choice was the right one, as my previously selected topic was no longer relevant to my current teaching position.

Having been through the majority of this process once before gave me valuable insight and what to expect the second time around. I was dreading the literature review this time, but because I chose a topic I greatly enjoy reading and learning about, I found the literature review less intimidating. I felt like I had an ample number of sources and many of the prewriting exercises really helped me with the flow and organization, which was incredibly valuable for this whole project.

The number of things that changed in my life from the beginning to the end of this process has been incredible, so crossing the finish line is extremely rewarding. It also allows me the freedom to continue my professional interests in a different way. I love that this project has laid the groundwork for me to creatively share my professional

interests, and I look forward to continuing my blog and exploring the use of mentor texts in my classroom.

Conclusion

My main learning from the literature review was that my current teaching practices are considered to be best practice. I also really connected to experts' recommendations on how to select mentor texts for one's classroom. My hope with sharing the results of my project via a blog will encourage other teachers to change the way they view mentor texts, as well as allow for greater conversations around mentor text use in their classrooms.

My question, *How can mentor texts be used to teach students in a second grade classroom?* was developed based on a combination of new teaching practices and conversations with colleagues. The process of writing the literature review was a highly informative process. Reading more in-depth about teaching practices that are connected to using mentor texts was one of the most enjoyable aspects of this whole process. It has really opened my eyes to the ultimate art of teaching--connecting all components of writing and reading in a seamless way so that students' reading influences their writing and their writing influences their reading. Anderson's (2017) visual in "Patterns of Power" is my favorite representation of this relationship. It shows a bridge: reading is on one side, writing is on the other. The two pillars that hold up the bridge are comprehension and composition, with grammar being the bridge, which is supported by meaning.

As mentioned previously, teaching writing has been one of my greatest challenges in the classroom. This quote from Bromley (2011) really helps me focus on what is most important in teaching writing, "Students learn to write when they are surrounded with examples and models, given expectations, allowed to make decisions and mistakes, given feedback, and allowed time to practice in realistic ways" (p. 296). Those are the important experiences I need to provide for my students, and it doesn't necessarily matter what the content is, rather it is the process that is essential for learning.

It can be overwhelming to change everything at once, and the advice to "start small" with books you love, given by both Laminack (2017) and Dorfman and Cappelli (2017) gives teachers permission to ease into the practice of teaching with mentor texts in their classroom. That is how I have approached integrating the use of mentor texts into my classroom. My first two blog posts give some introductory information about mentor texts and the next several posts explain how I have started the process of using mentor texts to teach grammar, writing, reading, and content area concepts in my classroom.

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APPENDIX A

Blog Post #1

So What Truly Is A Mentor Text?

You see lists for mentor texts all over these days--lists of books to teach this strategy or that concept are all over Pinterest. You get a list of mentor texts to teach each skill included in that awesome new TPT bundle you purchased. So, what truly is a mentor text?

Well, it depends upon the context. Most of the time, the term 'mentor text' is used in the context of writing. Stacey Shubitz (2016) describes mentor texts as "samples of exemplary writing we can study during writing workshops" in her book Craft Moves. Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (2017) define the term as "books or other texts that serves as examples of excellent writing." Lynn Dorfman has a great interview on National Writing Project Radio where she defines mentor texts as "pieces of literature you--both teacher and student--can return to and reread for many purposes. They are texts to be studied and imitated...Mentor texts help students take risks and be different writers tomorrow than they are today. It helps them to try out new strategies and formats." If we use the dictionary definition of mentor, it says that they are "an experienced and trusted advisor."

Taking into account all of this information, I think we need to focus on certain aspects of the various definitions. Experienced, exemplary, excellent. Mentor texts are all of these things--and more. They are texts that we should (as Dorfman says) study and imitate. We should return to them and reread them for more than one purpose. Another

thing to remember about mentor texts is that they are not just books. They could be poems, letters, songs--really anything that you return to many times in your teaching.

So, back to those lists of books that you got with your latest TPT purchase. Those books could easily be used as anchor texts. Anchor texts 'anchor' your lesson. These books are valuable and important, but they are not the books that are "as comfortable as a worn pair of blue jeans" as Dorfman and Cappelli refer to mentor texts (2017). Anchor texts are texts you might use once or twice to teach a lesson or concept. But mentor texts are texts you come back to time and time again--you use these books for a variety of teaching purposes. As a good teacher, you will likely have a big stack of anchor texts--I know I do! But your mentor text pile, well, that one holds your old favorites--the books you absolutely love to share with your students. These books will be your best friends to help teach writing craft, reading concepts, and likely even social skills, science, or social studies concepts.

In my next post, we'll dig deeper into mentor texts and explore the ways in which you can choose those texts. In the meantime, interested in checking out some of the authors I mentioned? The links are below.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on mentor texts or answer any questions in upcoming blog posts, so leave your 2c below.

Happy Reading!!

~Carrie

APPENDIX B

Blog Post #2

How Do I Choose Mentor Texts?

You've heard the term 'mentor text' and you think it's a great idea, but how do you

actually choose what texts will be your mentors? I think this process is a highly personal

one. It is true that you can get tons of suggestions of titles from experts and friends on

which books are great for teaching whatever concept or skill you're working on. But the

books you call your mentor texts--the books you come back to time and time

again--cannot be selected by others. They need to be picked by you. You see, you are

the only one who can decide which books will be loved and used time and time again in

your classroom.

I am still on this journey myself--I cannot say for certain which texts will

ultimately be my mentor texts this year. I am (hopefully like you) still evolving in my

teaching; with each year bringing new learning and growth to my classroom. This year I

have new ELA resources our district is using, and some of the books that I love to use to

teach with might have to be set aside this year. But next year, I might add those favorites

back in. I certainly have a stack of books that I do consider to be mentors to me and my

students.

Before we get into what the experts say, keep in mind these experts are all talking

about writing. Their focus and use of the term mentor text is all about those texts being

used to teach the craft of writing. I don't get too worked up about this for a few reasons.

Number one is that based on conversation with colleagues, teaching writing is one of the

biggest things that many teachers struggle with. So by digging into the use of mentor texts, our writing instruction will only become stronger. Secondly, using literature to teach reading strategies or concepts comes very naturally. Students read a text, and depending upon what standard you're focusing on, you can probably tie it in somehow. The third reason I'm not concerned about the focus on writing is that as you go through the process of thinking about how each text could be used, you will naturally focus on both reading and writing concepts and strategies you need to teach. The key here is that you will study the text to determine in what ways it can be a mentor to you and your students, and you will get to know the text (and the author) like an old friend. A friend you can turn to over and over again.

So let's explore what some of the experts suggest as a path to select mentor texts.

The first step that Laminack, Shubitz, Wood Ray, and Dorfman & Cappelli all agree upon is that a book should be a book that you (the teacher) love and enjoy. You must connect to it in some way--whether it's the language, illustrations, or message. It doesn't really matter, but you need to have joy and pleasure while reading the book. You have enjoyed the book as a reader.

The next step is to read the text like a writer. Look at the text structure, language, and voice. Will your students connect with the text somehow? Does the book connect with your teaching requirements? Laminack and Dorfman & Cappelli suggest starting with books you already love. Dig into these texts and explore how you can use them in your classroom.

Introducing the text to your students follows a similar path--first, there is enjoyment as a read aloud. Then, when you revisit it, you can use it to teach a concept: word choice, text structure, voice, illustrations, perspective--the list goes on. The thing to remember with these teaching opportunities is that you don't have to re-read the entire text. You can just use part of it for your teaching point. Mentor texts are not books that need to be re-read in their entirety--they are books you use for teaching many ideas. To me, this is the beauty of mentor texts--how easy it is to revisit a beloved read aloud to teach text structure. I often find myself saying "Remember when we read _____? When the author used _____?"

Dorfman and Cappelli's books are excellent guides to using mentor texts in your classroom. Their second edition of Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K-6 has a wealth of examples and a solid introduction into the use of mentor texts. There are "your turn" lessons at the end of each chapter to help guide you in sharing writing experiences with your students. They also have books focused on nonfiction and poetry mentor texts. Those three titles are linked at the bottom of this post.

Stacey Shubitz has a very detailed method for finding lessons in a mentor text in Craft Moves: Lesson Sets for Teaching Writing With Mentor Texts. In her book she reminds us that children need to be able to identify with the texts we choose, so being mindful of race, religion, and sexual orientation represented in the books we expose our students to is important. Shubitz's book is fairly new, and an excellent read. She chooses

her mentor texts very intentionally and methodically. She identifies "power craft moves" that she looks for in her mentor texts.

Katie Wood Ray identifies five parts to 'reading like a writer.' She outlines them in her 1999 book, Wondrous Words. When I switched to a workshop model for teaching writing, I used Ray's About The Authors as my guide.   Both books are excellent resources for teachers and give you guidance on units of study and changing the way you teach writing in your classroom.

The books I've mentioned are the ones I have found to be most beneficial to me as a teacher in the primary grades. There are many others (including Laminack and Fletcher) that have great books for teachers of writing in the upper grades. If you are really interested in mentor texts and becoming a better teacher of writing in your classroom, I highly recommend picking up one of these books. Any one will change your thinking, and hopefully get you excited about both mentor texts and teaching writing.

If you're on a budget though (and I know many teachers are), join me in my mentor text journey. I will share which books I am using as my mentor texts this year, and the lessons I am teaching with each text. So for now, dig into your read aloud stash, pull out your favorites, and start thinking about what teaching concepts and writer's craft lessons you could use that book for. And then, when it's time to teach those things, take out those beloved books. Start small. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day.

Happy Reading!

~Carrie

APPENDIX C

Blog Post #3

Nonfiction Text Features, Part I

One of the most important second grade reading standards is related to nonfiction texts. Reading nonfiction texts (as well as writing nonfiction) require a different approach than we take with fiction books. The numerous nonfiction text features that kids need to learn how to use to ensure they understand the text--headings, sidebars, captions, diagrams, maps, charts/graphs, glossaries, table of contents, and the index. Kids need to learn about these features so they know what value they bring to the text--not only to help read nonfiction text but also to help them write nonfiction text.

One of my favorite books to use at the beginning of the year to help students learn about these features is What If You Had Animal Teeth? by Sandra Markle and illustrated by Howard McWilliam. There is actually an entire What If You Had series, and they are all structured the same. Each page has a heading with the animal's name, text about it the body part (teeth in this case), a sidebar with a fact about the animal, and then a little blurb about if you had that animal's teeth. There is also a photograph of the animal, as well as an illustration of a human with the animal's teeth.

The What If You Had series is perfect for teaching nonfiction text features at the beginning of the year because they are very high-interest books (who wouldn't love to see what walrus teeth would look like on human?) but they have limited text features. The main two text features I focus on with these books are the headings and the sidebar featured on each page. The other really cool thing about this book is the mixture of

photographs and illustrations. The majority of nonfiction texts have photographs, so sometimes kids get confused if nonfiction texts have illustrations. Since this book has both, it is an excellent example of how both illustrations and photographs can be used in nonfiction text.

 The only downside (which is fairly minor) is that these books can take a bit longer to read than your typical read aloud. Allowing a bit of extra time or spreading them out over a couple of days will give you and your students the chance to fully enjoy all of the animals and information in these books. At the end of each book there a two pages about what's special about that body part (teeth, in this case) and also how to keep your human teeth healthy.

 When I introduce What If You Had Animal Teeth? to my class, we read it over two days. Second graders can have a hard time sitting for too long and they might zone out and miss a really cool animal or facts about them. Reading it over two days also allows your students to share what they remember from the previous day--and allows you to review those important components you want to focus on (in this case, those nonfiction text features). You could do a quick formative assessment to see if kids remember the terms you taught them the day before (heading, sidebar, etc.).

 After we've read the book during a writing mini lesson we talk about how they could incorporate headings and sidebars into their own nonfiction writing. I model some examples of what it could look like. I haven't had students print photographs for using in their books yet, but I think it would be a great idea. I'd love to see how kids might mix both drawings and photographs into their nonfiction books.

What are some of your favorite books to teach nonfiction text features with?

Share them below!

Happy Reading!

~Carrie

APPENDIX D

Blog Post #4

Speech Bubbles & Thinking Bubbles

When we are teaching our students how to infuse their writing with various craft moves, structure their texts in different ways, or use a variety of text features, there is no easier way to do this than with a mentor text. Some of my favorite mentor texts are the Diary of A Worm/Spider/Fly books written by Doreen Cronin and illustrated by Harry Bliss. These are great humorous books with so many teaching purposes you will have a hard time deciding which one to start with! Because I read one of these stories at the beginning of the year with our reading series (Journeys), I start with a mini lesson that makes the most sense for my second graders at the beginning of the year.

In my classroom during writer's workshop, we write books. My students often write fiction stories, and needless to say, it's not long before they are writing dialogue in their books. I do get to the point where I teach them about quotation marks, but at the beginning of the year, I find that speech and thinking bubbles are a bit more accessible.

The Diary of . . . books are great for teaching this concept. The stories are told like a diary with entries in order by date. The illustrations take up the majority of each page, with limited text. This focus on the illustrations really makes this book a great choice for teaching about speech and thinking bubbles because kids are concentrating on the illustrations--they are a big part of the storyline. Additionally, the text in the speech and thinking bubbles adds to the story, so if the kids don't read it, they are missing out on some humorous dialogue.

The mini lesson for this concept typically goes very well as the students are excited to share other examples of speech and thinking bubbles they have seen in other texts. Modeling is not always necessary as kids have seen speech and thinking bubbles previously, and once you bring their attention to it, they look for them everywhere. Second graders are typically very in tune to the slight difference between the two types of bubbles--the little circles vs the pointy part. They enjoy practicing drawing them and incorporating them into their writing. A good tip is to teach them to write the words first and then draw their bubble around it.

This is one of my favorite mini lessons to teach because the kids are so excited to utilize this craft in their writing! What are your favorite books to use to teach thinking and speech bubbles? Leave your favorite titles below.

Happy Reading!!

~Carrie

APPENDIX E

Blog Post #5

Teaching Point Of View

One of my favorite things about being a teacher is getting to read (and buy!) new books. Going to a bookstore or filling up my shopping cart online never feels guilt-ridden--it's always perfectly okay to spend some money on books. After all, me and my students will not only enjoy them but use them for a learning experience. There is no way to put a price on that!

There are a couple of second grade reading standards relating to characters. One is how characters respond to major events and challenges, and the other is acknowledging the differences in the characters' point of view. I use a couple of different books for this purpose--I usually use one to teach the concept with the whole class (*I Wanna Iguana)*, and then I use a second book to assess the standard. I use *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt (illustrated by Oliver Jeffers) to do the point of view assessment with my second graders. I also use *The Day the Crayons Quit* for other teaching purposes (stay tuned to upcoming posts about those), and our school librarian reads it to the kids as well. So I find that my students have a good grasp on the storyline and characters, thus making it a great choice for an authentic assessment.

This text lends itself beautifully to the discussion of of point of view. If you aren't familiar with *The Day the Crayons Quit*, it is comprised of a series of letters written from the various colors of crayons found in a box of crayons to their owner, Duncan. They are, as the title implies, quitting. Each of them has their own issue with Duncan and his

use of them. One of the best things about this book is that each page appears to be written by the actual crayon--meaning in that color--and in a script-like font. It can be a bit tricky for kids who don't know cursive to be able to read it, but it adds so much to the book. The illustrations are 'colored' in crayon and helps kids remember what each crayon mentioned drawing in their letter to Duncan. After you enjoy this book with your students, you can follow up with *The Day the Crayons Came Home*. This time, instead of letters, the crayons have written to Duncan on postcards.

Much of my 'teaching' with this text involves talking about it each time we read it. By the time I use this text for my point of view assessment, my students have generally heard it 2-3 times. I read it one more time and discuss the crayons' letters to Duncan. You could even make an anchor chart as students recall the details of the text. The next day I pass out a sheet that asks the kids to tell me the point of view from 3 different crayons. I even let them write with colored pencils that match each crayon (which they love!). Because this book is told from each crayon's perspective, it makes it really easy for the kids to give text evidence in their answers.

What are your favorite books for teaching point of view?

Happy Reading!!

~Carrie

APPENDIX F

Blog Post #6

Teaching Quotation Marks

As the school year progresses, I always try to push my students to try new craft moves in their writing. Early in the year, I introduce using speech bubbles to show dialogue (read about that here). Partway through the year, I find my more advanced writers are ready to start using quotation marks. It is great to offer a second way for students to show conversation between characters. Quotation marks can be a bit tricky, but it's worth it to teach the correct way to use them. Even if kids don't get the comma in the exact right place, it is an important skill they will be able to refine in the future.

To teach the use of quotation marks, I return to one of our favorites, Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes. This is a read aloud I share the first week of school to talk about how our words have power. It is a great lesson that many kids can connect with. Kevin Henkes has so many great books and I wish I had time to use all of his books throughout the year. So many great books, so little time! Anyway, I like to use Chrysanthemum because there is such great dialogue on almost every page.

For this mini lesson I start by putting the text (or a copy of some of the pages) up on the Smartboard. We look for quotation marks and I highlight them in yellow. I point out the comma and we highlight that in blue. Then I give kids copies of various pages of Chrysanthemum that I have photocopied. They work together in pairs, highlighting the quotation marks in yellow in each sentence of dialogue. We discuss their findings and share them using the document camera.

The next day we review their observations from Chrysanthemum, discussing that there are quotation marks and commas where the dialogue is. I have some dialogue prepared on chart paper (without quotation marks and commas) and we go through it together and add quotation marks in the appropriate places. Then, I have them get out one of the books they have already written (or are in the middle of writing) that has dialogue. They practice adding quotation marks with the guidance of their learning partner.

In second grade, I don't expect perfection with this skill, which is why we focus on just adding the quotation marks. Later mini lessons can focus on the dialogue tag and that pesky comma (if it's needed). The next time I teach quotation marks, I am going to try incorporating some strategies that Jeff Anderson suggests in Patterns of Power. He has some great lesson ideas, and the key one I think I am going to try out is using the focus phrase, "I open and close words spoken aloud with quotation marks." It helps bring students' attention to the fact that quotation marks are used when a character is speaking. If you are interested in Anderson's lessons, I highly recommend his books. Patterns of Power is focused on primary, while Mechanically Inclined and Everyday Editing are more suitable for those teaching upper elementary on up. Those books are linked at the bottom of the post if you're interested in checking them out.

I'd love to know which texts you use to teach quotation marks~share those below! Happy Reading!!

~Carrie