Reaching the Reluctant Writer

- Students who dislike writing often struggle because they do not know WHAT to write about.

- Thinking of something to write is not a prerequisite for learning HOW to write.

- Writing is a complicated process: spelling, handwriting, and composition are different neurological functions. For many students this complexity must be broken into small manageable pieces.

- Imitation, as a critical part of learning anything, is the best way to learn to write.

- Students who do not worry about WHAT to write can learn HOW to write. As students gain confidence and competence, they become comfortable determining what to write.

- A source text provides content for writing in addition to reviewing content from history, science, literature, or geography. Writing becomes a part of the study of these subjects rather than a subject unto itself.

- Just as Benjamin Franklin took "short hints of the sentiment in each sentence" to teach himself to write, students can use key word outlines to help them write from simple source texts.

- Fiction or non-fiction, source texts should be at or below student reading level. Selections of 4-8 sentences are ideal. Aesop's fables work well.

Source Text

The Fox and the Goat

By an unlucky chance, a fox fell into a deep well from which there was no escape. A goat passed by and asked the fox, "What are you doing down there?" "Oh, have you not heard?" said the fox. "There is going to be a great drought, so I came down here in order to be sure to have water by me. Why don't you come down too?" The goat thought this a good idea and jumped into the well. The fox immediately sprang on the goat's back, and by putting a foot on the goat's long horns, managed to hop up to the edge of the well. "Remember," said the fox, "be careful of the advice of one who is in trouble."

Key Word Outline

_____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Use of the Key Word Outline (KWO)

Step 1: Verbal Summary

Students verbally test the outline, forming complete sentences from each line of notes.
Duplication is neither expected nor required.

*Students benefit from repeated practice of reading short, easy-to-read paragraphs,
choosing key words, writing key word outlines, and telling back content.
Practice until the process is easy.*

Step 2: Written Summary — first draft

Students use the outline to write a summary paragraph.

*Composition, spelling, and handwriting are different brain functions.
Don't expect perfect spelling, worry about neatness, over correct or lecture, or frown and grimace.
Do be a human dictionary, encourage no erasing, praise efforts, and smile as much as possible.*

Step 3: Written Summary — final draft

After parents edit spelling, grammar, and punctuation, students neatly copy or type their final drafts.
The first draft is never the final draft.

*Repeat Steps 1–3 until the process becomes relatively easy.
Help. Give suggestions. Dictate sentences if necessary.
When students understand the process, proceed to Step 4.*

Step 4: Written Summary with Dress-Ups

Provide students with a list of -ly adverbs and have them add one -ly adverb to each paragraph. Do many assignments requiring just one -ly adverb. When this is easy, teach students how to add a *who/which* clause. Introduce additional dress-ups, one at a time. Remember, EZ+1!

1. -ly adverb   The fox <u>effortlessly</u> jumped up on the goat's back and escaped the well.

2. *who/which* clause   The clever fox convinced the goat, <u>who</u> jumped into the well.

3. strong verb   The fox <u>spun</u> a tale of impending drought.

4. *because* clause   The goat believed the fox <u>because</u> the fox seemed sincere.

5. quality adjective   The fox spun a tale of <u>impending</u> drought.

6. *www.asia* clause   The goat believed the fox <u>when</u> he explained a drought would come.

Create a specific checklist for your student and provide word lists to ensure success.

-ly Adverbs	
carelessly	obnoxiously
cleverly	politely
clumsily	quietly
curiously	rudely
deftly	slyly
foolishly	trustingly
ignorantly	unhappily
innocently	unfortunately

Checklist

GENERAL
- ☐ date and name at top _____
- ☐ title centered _____

DRESS-UPS
- ☐ -ly adverb _____
- ☐ *who/which* clause _____
- ☐ strong verb _____
- ☐ *because* clause _____
- ☐ quality adjective _____
- ☐ *www.asia* clause _____

MECHANICS
- ☐ spelling, grammar, punctuation _____