

USING MENTOR SENTENCES

created by

IDEAS by JIVEY

Case Study

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Summary of Study

This study concentrates on using mentor sentence lessons written by Ideas by Jivey to improve students' writing abilities in the areas of style, grammar, and mechanics. It also addresses students' passion for writing and teachers' passion for delivering the content.

The areas of style and conventions in writing are two areas teachers agree usually suffer in student writing. It has been proven by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) that teaching grammar in isolation does not carry over into writing. It is imperative to combine grammar and writing instruction for students to see the connection and apply those skills. Using the mentor sentence routine in Ideas by Jivey's curriculum will improve students' style and conventions abilities.

Over the course of one school year, writing samples were collected from 469 students in grades ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade. Of those 469 students, 115 were taught writing and grammar without the use of mentor sentence lessons from Ideas by Jivey. The other 354 students were taught writing and grammar with the mentor sentence routine laid out in Ideas by Jivey's curriculum. Writing samples were collected to track growth in style, grammar, and mechanics. Surveys were also administered to determine feelings, likes, and dislikes of the students and teachers in the study.

Mentor Sentences

Mentor sentences provide students the opportunity to discuss, learn, and apply grammar and craft skills presented in well-written sentences from mentor texts that are already used for other lessons in the classroom.

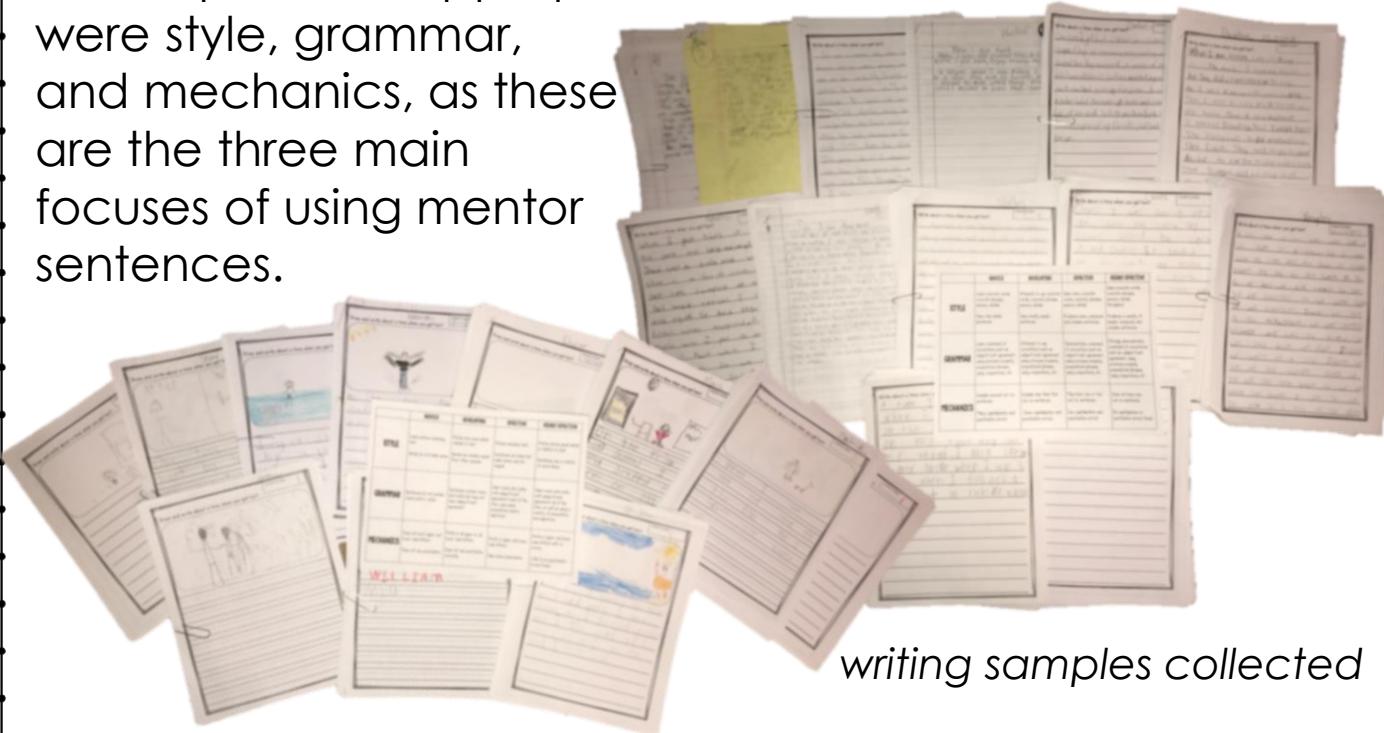
Within Ideas by Jivey's curriculum, using a routine adapted from the concepts presented by author of Mechanically Inclined, Jeff Anderson, students will notice what makes a well-written sentence a "mentor sentence." It will be imitated in their own writing over the course of a week. Through discussion, examination, and analysis, students will learn how to apply the style, grammar, and mechanics concepts that are presented. Students will be exposed to several skills within each lesson based around one sentence. Those skills are spiraled over the course of the year in various sentences, making a true impact on students' understanding.

The mentor sentences lessons written by Ideas by Jivey teach students: the importance of using concrete words/phrases and sensory details, to write a variety of types of sentences, to demonstrate a command of conventions, and to learn the way a sentence "should" look. Students don't just memorize grammar rules, but instead practice grammar components in writing.

Data Collection

An anonymous google survey was administered to students and teachers at the beginning and the end of the year to inquire about feelings and preferences.

Five teachers (one per grade, K-5) did not implement mentor sentences lessons from Ideas by Jivey, while the other nineteen teachers (ranging from two to four teachers per grade, K-5) did consistently implement the routine and lessons. In order to assess student growth, teachers provided students with a writing prompt at the beginning of the school year, and then provided them the same prompt at the end of the school year. These writing samples were collected for individual comparison of growth. The beginning and end of the year writing samples were all graded with the same rubrics, corresponding to grade level. The rubrics vary in developmental appropriateness. The areas assessed were style, grammar, and mechanics, as these are the three main focuses of using mentor sentences.



K-2 RUBRIC



	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	Lacks picture matching text Words do not make sense	Picture has some detail related to text Words are mostly copied from other sources	Picture matches text Sentences are basic but make sense and are original	Picture shows great detail in relation to text Sentences use a variety of word choice
GRAMMAR	Sentences do not contain nouns and/or verbs	Sentences contain nouns and verbs but may not have subject/verb agreement	Uses nouns and verbs with subject/verb agreement most of the time, uses some prepositions and/or adjectives	Uses nouns and verbs with subject/verb agreement all of the time, as well as using a variety of prepositions and adjectives
MECHANICS	Does not print upper and lower case letters	Prints in all upper or all lower case letters	Prints in upper and lower case letters with no errors	Prints in upper and lower case letters with no errors found

3-5 RUBRIC



NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE Lacks concrete words, concrete phrases, sensory details Uses only simple sentences	Attempts to use concrete words, concrete phrases, sensory details Uses mostly simple sentences	Uses many concrete words, concrete phrases, sensory details Produces some compound and complex sentences	Uses concrete words, concrete phrases, sensory details throughout Produces a variety of simple, compound, and complex sentences
GRAMMAR Lacks command of conventions such as: subject/verb agreement, using pronouns properly, prepositional phrases, using conjunctions, etc.	Attempts to use conventions such as: subject/verb agreement, using pronouns properly, prepositional phrases, using conjunctions, etc.	Demonstrates command of conventions such as: subject/verb agreement, using pronouns properly, prepositional phrases, using conjunctions, etc.	Strongly demonstrates command of conventions such as: subject/verb agreement, using pronouns properly, prepositional phrases, using conjunctions, etc.
MECHANICS Includes several run-on sentences Many capitalization and punctuation errors	Includes less than four run-on sentences Some capitalization and punctuation errors	May have one or two run-on sentences Few capitalization and punctuation errors	Does not have any run-on sentences No capitalization or punctuation errors found

Results Reflected in the Study

Teachers rated statements at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year to reflect on experiences. There were 12%-47% more teachers who strongly agreed about the improvement they saw with mentor sentences. There was also a tremendous positive shift in the way teachers felt before using mentor sentences, to after.

ALL TEACHERS -BEGINNING OF YEAR

Rate the following statements:

	do not agree	agree	strongly agree
past students understood grammar and mechanics	48%	52%	0%
past students enjoyed writing time	48%	48%	4%
past students make reading -> writing connection	48%	52%	0%
past students showed style/craft improvement	19%	48%	33%
past students showed conventions improvement	56%	44%	0%

TEACHERS USING MENTOR SENTENCES -END OF YEAR

current students understood grammar and mechanics	6%	47%	47%
current students enjoyed writing time	11%	74%	15%
current students make reading -> writing connection	16%	47%	37%
current students showed style/craft improvement	6%	42%	52%
current students showed conventions improvement	0%	58%	42%

TEACHERS NOT USING MENTOR SENTENCES -END OF YEAR

current students understood grammar and mechanics	0%	100%	0%
current students enjoyed writing time	0%	100%	0%
current students make reading -> writing connection	60%	40%	0%
current students showed style/craft improvement	0%	60%	40%
current students showed conventions improvement	0%	100%	0%

Results Reflected in the Study

All of the teachers in the study reported that they liked teaching new writing strategies. When asked to select as many of the ways they like to teach about a new skill, "showing examples and models from others," and, "allowing students to practice and share with their peers" were the overwhelming majority (with 90-100% agreeing this is their preference), and using worksheets was far in the minority (with 10% agreeing this is their preference).

What is your favorite way to teach about a new skill?

K-2

3-5

worksheets	10%	10%
showing examples/models from others	100%	100%
holding class discussions	67%	83%
allowing students to practice and share	67%	100%
homework	0%	0%

Students also felt strongly about the way they learned. They would prefer to see examples and talk about what they are learning rather than do worksheets.

What is your favorite way to learn about a new skill?

K-2

3-5

worksheets	31%	30%
seeing examples from others	45%	34%
talking about it with my class	41%	47%
practicing and sharing with others	33%	41%
homework	37%	29%

Results of ALL Students in the Study

All of the students in the study showed improvement in style, grammar, and mechanics, whether their teacher implemented the mentor sentence routine or not. The difference in growth, however, was astounding.

ALL MS USERS-
BEGINNING

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	18%	47%	29%	6%
GRAMMAR	24%	53%	22%	1%
MECHANICS	39%	39%	21%	1%

ALL MS USERS-
END

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	2%	11%	39%	48%
GRAMMAR	3%	23%	47%	28%
MECHANICS	7%	29%	37%	27%

ALL NON-MS USERS-
BEGINNING

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	16%	38%	44%	2%
GRAMMAR	24%	51%	23%	2%
MECHANICS	30%	49%	18%	3%

ALL NON-MS USERS-
END

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	1%	26%	52%	21%
GRAMMAR	9%	34%	42%	14%
MECHANICS	12%	39%	39%	10%

Results Reflected in the Study

- There was a **42% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **23% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **52% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **25% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **27% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **15% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **52% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **21% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **26% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **19% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **42% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **15% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.

Results of ALL Students in the Study

As seen in the results on the previous pages, the students made great growth overall. Below, you will find how students progressed individually. The data shows the number of students that did not make any progress from the beginning of the year to the end, and those that improved in at least area (style, grammar, or mechanics) by one level (from novice to developing, for example), two levels (from developing to highly effective, for example), or three levels (from novice to highly effective, for example).

46% of the students who learned using lessons from Ideas by Jivey's mentor sentence curriculum improved in at least one area by two or three levels. This is **29% more** than the students who did not learn using mentor sentences.

ALL STUDENTS	NO PROGRESS	MOVED 1 LEVEL	MOVED 2 LEVELS	MOVED 3 LEVELS
WITH MENTOR SENTENCES	6%	48%	42%	4%
WITHOUT MENTOR SENTENCES	13%	70%	16%	1%

K-1 Results Reflected in the Study

The following results are the kindergarten and first grade students, grouped together, as they use much of the same curriculum. The differences in results of style and mechanics in the highly effective band is most evident.

K-1 MS USERS-
BEGINNING

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	58%	19%	22%	1%
GRAMMAR	56%	31%	13%	0%
MECHANICS	54%	32%	13%	1%

K-1 MS USERS-
END

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	7%	15%	37%	41%
GRAMMAR	10%	27%	36%	27%
MECHANICS	9%	26%	40%	25%

K-1 NON-MS USERS-
BEGINNING

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	60%	20%	20%	0%
GRAMMAR	55%	30%	10%	5%
MECHANICS	20%	45%	30%	5%

K-1 NON-MS USERS-
END

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	5%	30%	40%	25%
GRAMMAR	20%	45%	15%	20%
MECHANICS	15%	40%	40%	5%

K-1 Results Reflected in the Study

- There was a **40% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **15% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **55% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **10% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **27% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **12% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **50% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **30% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **24% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **24% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **51% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **10% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.

Grade 2 Results Reflected in the Study

The following results are the second grade students. The students' comparable amount of growth in the area of style is most noticeable, as is the evidence of grammar knowledge with the use of mentor sentences.

2nd MS USERS-
BEGINNING

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	14%	64%	20%	2%
GRAMMAR	20%	69%	11%	0%
MECHANICS	46%	36%	18%	0%

2nd MS USERS-
END

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	0%	9%	40%	51%
GRAMMAR	0%	18%	56%	26%
MECHANICS	4%	38%	36%	22%

2nd NON-MS USERS-
BEGINNING

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	0%	25%	70%	5%
GRAMMAR	20%	45%	30%	5%
MECHANICS	25%	50%	20%	5%

2nd NON-MS USERS-
END

	NOVICE	DEVELOPING	EFFECTIVE	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
STYLE	0%	20%	60%	20%
GRAMMAR	10%	40%	35%	15%
MECHANICS	10%	45%	30%	15%

Grade 2 Results Reflected in the Study

- There was a **49% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **34% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **69% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **64% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **26% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **16% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **71% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **15% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **22% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **12% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **40% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **20% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.

3rd-5th Results Reflected in the Study

The following results are the third, fourth, and fifth grade students, grouped together, as they use much of the same curriculum. The amount of growth in the highly effective band for those using mentor sentences is most evident.

**3-5 MS USERS-
BEGINNING**

NOVICE

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

STYLE	6%	51%	34%	9%
GRAMMAR	14%	54%	29%	3%
MECHANICS	31%	42%	24%	3%

**3-5 MS USERS-
END**

NOVICE

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

STYLE	1%	10%	39%	50%
GRAMMAR	1%	23%	48%	28%
MECHANICS	8%	27%	36%	29%

**3-5 NON-MS USERS-
BEGINNING**

NOVICE

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

STYLE	7%	47%	44%	2%
GRAMMAR	15%	60%	25%	0%
MECHANICS	35%	50%	14%	1%

**3-5 NON-MS USERS-
END**

NOVICE

DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

STYLE	0%	26%	53%	21%
GRAMMAR	5%	29%	54%	12%
MECHANICS	11%	37%	45%	7%

3rd-5th Results Reflected in the Study

- There was a **41% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **22% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **46% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of style. This is **18% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **25% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **13% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **44% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of grammar. This is **3% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- There was a **26% increase** in the number of highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **20% higher** than the growth of highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences. There was a **38% increase** in the number of effective AND highly effective students using mentor sentences in the area of mechanics. This is **1% higher** than the growth of effective AND highly effective students who were not using mentor sentences.
- Although the amount of growth appears to shrink when comparing users to non-users, it is a reflection of minimal movement from lower bands in the non-users classes.

Results Not Reflected in the Study

The following reflections were contributed by the teachers in the case study.

- *This school year was the first time I used mentor sentences. I saw the most growth in my students' understanding to what a sentence is, to alphabet and letter sound correspondence, blending words and the use of invented spelling when writing sentences.*
- *Mentor sentences have made a profound impact on my students' writing and understanding of grammar and mechanics!*
- *Before using mentor sentences, my students didn't cheer about grammar. Seeing my students excited about grammar and writing made this teacher's heart happy.*
- *I saw a new change in their desire to learn and their writing improved exponentially.*
- *After using mentor sentences with my students, I even understand grammar more. My fifth grade teachers would be so surprised.*
- *If I forgot to do mentor sentences at the beginning of class, many students would begin to remind me.*
- *Before using mentor sentences, I realized my students did not know certain concepts, even though I taught them throughout the year. But this year, my students were identifying adverbs and prepositions as early as November even though my "curriculum" does not introduce it until April/May.*
- *My students scored 90% in NWEA Language!*
- *Mentor sentences were my students' favorite part of my ELA writing block.*

Conclusions

Teachers are eager to find a way to improve their grammar and writing instruction. Most teachers don't like to use worksheets, and favor holding discussions and showing models as examples from which students can learn. Students also prefer these same methods. This is precisely what occurs using the mentor sentence curriculum by Ideas by Jivey.

There was a large shift in what teachers observed of the students who learned from mentor sentences in Ideas by Jivey's curriculum. More teachers agreed that using mentor sentences helped students understand grammar and mechanics, and make the reading and writing connection. More teachers strongly agreed that they saw improvement in style and conventions than those teachers not using mentor sentences. Finally, more teachers also agreed or strongly agreed that students enjoyed writing time when using mentor sentences.

Over the course of the school year, there were tremendous increases in growth in style, grammar, and mechanics from students in all grades. The highest percentage of growth was in the area of style. This is due to the variety of authors' work examined over the course of the year within the curriculum by Ideas by Jivey.

Students showed more growth in writing when consistently taught with mentor sentences from the curriculum by Ideas by Jivey than those that were not. The study also proves that students make more gains over the course of the year when mentor sentences have been implemented.

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