PARAGRAPH-LEVEL FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT[1]

3rd-5th Grade English Language Arts

Challenge	Suggestions for Support
Knowledge or understandings are incorrect.	- Review student outlines prior to writing. If students have incorrect evidence or details, have students fix their details. For each detail, push students to think about the following questions: - How does this detail support the topic sentence? - Why is this detail important? - How is this detail different from the other details? - Allow students time to orally articulate an answer to the question prior to drafting an outline. - Have students reread sections of the text either as part of a close read or individually. Prompt students to notice key details.
Topic sentence is incorrect.	This is most likely a comprehension issue and not a writing issue. - Make sure students fully understand the question and the text prior to writing a topic sentence. - Have students brainstorm and find multiple details before picking a topic sentence. Students should look at all of the details and ask themselves, "What do these details have in common?" - Make sure that students have gathered the right details. If students have incorrect details, their topic sentence will inevitably be incorrect as well.
Topic sentence is a supporting detail.	- Review the purpose of a topic sentence. - Provide students with a series of sentences, some that could be topic sentences for a particular topic and others that are supporting sentences. Have students sort the sentences and articulate what makes a sentence a topic sentence vs. a supporting sentence.
Topic sentence is too simple.	- Review different strategies for expanding on the topic sentence. - Model how to expand sentences using *who, what, where, when* and *why.* Start by having students add one type of detail at a time.

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[1] These supports are inspired by the book *The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades* by Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017).

	○ Model how to use coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to combine ideas. ○ Model how to use appositives to add more information to a topic sentence.
Supporting details do not match topic sentence or are inaccurate.	This is most likely a comprehension issue and not a writing issue. - Provide students with a list of evidence for a particular question or topic. Some evidence should be relevant, and some should be irrelevant. Have students sort the evidence and explain how they decided which evidence was relevant and which evidence was not. - If students' details are inaccurate, go back to the students' brainstorms or outlines. Make sure that the students have brainstormed details that support the topic sentence. - Push students to think critically about their evidence using the following prompts: ○ Why is the information important to understanding your topic sentence or argument? ○ What connections exist between this idea and your topic sentence? ○ How does the evidence make your argument stronger? ○ Why should anyone care about this reason or evidence?
Supporting details need more elaboration.	- If students elaborate using formulaic sentence frames or structures, review different strategies for elaborating on details. ○ Model how to expand sentences using *who, what, where, when* and *why.* ○ Model how to use coordinating conjunctions to combine ideas. ○ Model how to use subordinating conjunctions to add more details. ○ Model how to use transition words to add details that explain or illustrate a particular detail. ○ Provide students with unelaborated paragraphs. Have students identify what types of details and information should be added to the paragraph and why. ○ Have students orally elaborate details prior to writing. It is often easier for students to describe an idea orally than in writing.

	- Review exemplars that include effective reasoning and explanation. Have students notice what makes the reasoning effective and why.

Over relies on one strategy for including evidence and reasons.	- Review with students' a few additional strategies for including reasons and evidence:
	   o Paraphrasing key understandings from the text
	   o Including specific vocabulary
	   o Mini-stories
	   o Direct quotations (Grade 5 only)

Uses transitions words and phrases incorrectly or too frequently.	- Review the different types of transitions and when to use different types of transitions.
	   o Transitions that show time (these types of transitions are used to sequence events or steps in a process)
	   o Transitions that show conclusions
	   o Transitions that illustrate a particular idea by giving examples, giving supporting details, explaining a statement, or elaborating on a statement
	   o Transitions that show a change of direction, particularly contrasting thoughts
	   o Transitions that show emphasis
	- Have students jot transition words on their Single-Paragraph Outlines prior to writing.
	- Review that transition words should only be used to signal a connection between ideas. If the connection between ideas is already obvious, a transition word may not be necessary.
	- If students are using transition words formulaically, have them try to add one new transition word to their writing at a time.
	- Provide students with a non-example that uses too many transition words. Prompt students to think about how too many transition words makes the paragraph harder for the reader to understand.

Concluding sentence is formulaic.	- Review the purpose of a concluding sentence. - Provide students with a variety of strategies for drafting a concluding sentence.

References

Hochman, Judith C. and Wexler, Natalie. *The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017.