Exercises for Paragraph Writing Skills

Topic Sentences/Introductions

Students need lots and lots of practice with topic sentences. These sentences should introduce the paragraph and also engage the reader.

Exercises:

- Analyze topic sentences from mentor texts to see how they introduce the topic and engage the reader.
- Provide students with three supporting sentences and work together to generate ideas for topic sentences.
- Give students a title for a paragraph and have them come up with possible topic sentences to go along with it.

Conclusions

Students need practice with conclusions, which should reword the topic stated in the topic sentence and also provide a reaction or response to the topic.

Exercises:

- This is another great place to look at mentor texts and analyze good examples of concluding sentences.
- Provide a topic sentence and work together to generate ideas for a concluding sentence.
- You might also provide a paragraph with everything but the conclusion and have students come up with ideas to end the paragraph.

Transition Words

As students become more adept at writing cohesive paragraphs, they will need to be able to identify and use conjunctions and other transition words to take their writing to the next level.

Exercises:

- Teach them that transition words help them show the reader how two sentences or ideas are connected.
- Start simply with first, next and last and then slowly introduce a variety of transition words.
- Consider using a poster that you can add to as the year goes on.
- Celebrate students who use or find new transition words and add them to your shared list. Celebrate variety and creativity to avoid formulaic writing.