



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

December 8, 2003

Volume 1 Number 14

Transition Words

Transitional devices are like bridges between parts of your paper. They are cues that help the reader to interpret ideas in the way that you, as a writer, want them to understand. Transitional devices help you carry over a thought from one sentence to another, from one idea to another, or from one paragraph to another with words or phrases. And finally, transitional devices link your sentences and paragraphs together smoothly so that there are no abrupt jumps or breaks between ideas.

There are several types of transitional devices, and each category leads your reader to make certain connections or assumptions about the areas you are connecting. Some lead your reader forward and imply the "building" of an idea or thought, while others make your reader compare ideas or draw conclusions from the preceding thoughts.

Here is a list of some common transitional devices that can be used to cue the reader that the essay or paragraph is complete. Encourage your students to employ them when writing their bell work, following the rubric that was presented at a recent Professional Development day.

Summary, Repetition, or Conclusion
as a result, as has been noted, as I have said, as we have seen, as mentioned earlier, in any event, in conclusion, in other words, in short, on the whole, therefore, to summarize

Remember: Our students should be writing on a daily basis. Encouraging them to follow the template that was given to the staff and grading the work according to the rubric will prepare our students to write in an organized manner, following the format that is required on the CAPT. Using effective transitions is one simple technique that we can teach our students; using these words can assist them in making their thoughts clear and easy to follow.

Scoring Student Writing

Based on a rubric of 0, 1, and 2, what would you score each of the following samples of student writing? How would you justify your score?

1. I believe that a comatose person in a permanent vegetative state should be allowed to live regardless of their status. The only people who should have a say on if a comatose person should live should be their parents. If you decide to kill a person because they are in a vegetative state, you will never know if that person could have had another chance at life.

2. No, I don't think a comatose person in a permanent vegetative state for 12 years should be allowed to die. No one knows if when she's removed from the feeding tubes who's to say that she won't feel the awful hunger pains of starvation. You can't just end someone's life. No one should play God. Let her go on her own. Taking her off the feeding tubes and allowing her to die is not right. It's immoral.

3. I think a person shouldn't be allowed to die. I feel that it's not right to kill her. How do we know if she will feel pain?

Remember: a good response—a 2—should contain three points:

1. The opening should address the prompt.
2. The middle section should provide accurate data/information about the topic.
3. There should be closure.

How do the three samples of student writing fare? Do they address what you would expect them to? How would you encourage the student who wrote the weakest response to improve her work?

Think about the following questions:

- Are all three opening sentences equally successful? Which is the weakest? Why? How could this be remedied?
- What about the middle section? Which gives the most complete details, the most specific?
- What about the closing statements? Are they all effective? Do they all provide a clear sense that the piece is concluded?

How would you use these samples as teaching tools with your class?

What would you tell your students to do to improve the poorest sample?