Evidence-Based Writing

Presented by Bill Walker
Components of writing
Characteristics of struggling writers
Evidence-based writing interventions
Struggling Writers

How often do you hear...

• What do you want me to write about?
• I don’t know how to write.
• What if I can’t fill up the whole page?
• How long does it have to be?
Writing Matters...

But achievement lags

• 51-58% are at a basic level of writing
  • Below the desired reading level

• 16-22% are below the basic level of writing
  • Struggling writers
Around the Bend

And the bar is being raised...

- The Common Core Standards writing framework
- The 2014 GED® Test extended item response
Components of Writing

Writing involves...

• Transcription skills
• Self-regulation skills
Components of Writing

Transcription Skills

• Graphemic awareness
• Spelling
• Vocabulary
• Grammar/syntax/semantics
• Punctuation and capitalization
Components of Writing

Self-Regulation Skills

• Acquire knowledge
• Retrieve knowledge
• Plan text
• Construct text
• Edit and Revise text
• Regulate entire process
Struggling Writers

• Lack a clear understanding of the purpose
• Fail to have a plan for composition
• Lack strategies or procedures for generating and organizing ideas
• Over-rely on narrative or descriptive text structures

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Struggling Writers

- Make more mechanical errors
- Make more syntax errors
- Show less word and sentence fluency
- Correct only mechanical errors
- Do not have a plan for revising the content
What Does the Research Show?

The list of 8 recommendations presented in the remainder of the presentation is based on scientific studies of the efficacy of development writing strategies.

These strategies for teaching writing are listed in accordance to the magnitude of their effects.
Strategy #1

Writing Strategies:

Explicitly teach students strategies for planning, writing, editing, and revising.

Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) is most effective.
Strategy #1 SRSD Instruction

Five Steps:

• Instructors and learners discuss the strategy
• Instructors model the strategy more than once
• Learners memorize the strategy
• Instructors support the strategy through corrective feedback/more instruction
• Learners use the strategy independently
Strategy #1 SRSD Instruction

Mnemonic Devices Drive SRSD

• **PLAN**
  • Pay attention to the prompt, List the main idea, Add supporting details, Number your ideas

• **POWER**
  • Plan, Organize, Write, Edit, Revise

• **LIST**
  • List Ideas and Sequence Them
Strategy #1 SRSD Instruction

Mnemonic Devices Drive SRSD

• TREE
  • Note your Topic sentence, note your Reasons, Examine each reason, note your Ending

• WRITE
  • Work from your plan to develop a thesis statement,
  Remembe your goals, Include transition words, Try different sentence types, use Exciting words
Strategy #2

Summarize Text:

Explicitly teach students procedures for summarizing what they read
Strategy #3

Collaborative Writing:

Allow students to work together to plan, write, edit, and revise their writing.
Setting Specific Product Goals:

Set specific goals for the writing assignments that students are to complete.
Strategy #4 – One Approach

• Divide your classroom into two camps
• Present a concept that has at least two points of view
• Instruct Camp 1 and Camp 2 to take divergent positions
• Camps write persuasive text designed to convert the other Camp
• Camps present their final document
Strategy #4 – Additional Directives

• Specific sub-goals addressing argumentative discourse including a statement or belief
• Two or three reasons for that belief
• Examples or supporting information for each reason
• Two or three reasons why others might disagree, and why those reasons are incorrect
Word Processing:

Word processing equipment can be especially helpful for low-achieving writers.
Strategy #6

Sentence Generating Exercises:

Explicitly teach students to write more complex and sophisticated sentences.
Strategy # 6 Exercise

Sentence Generating Exercises

Expand these stem sentences by adding information that answers the questions:

- Who/Whose
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How many/How much/To what extent

Example: The pond was frozen.

Who/Whose pond?
   Old McDonald’s pond was frozen.

Where was the pond?
   Old McDonald’s pond, behind the barn on his farm, was frozen.

When was the pond frozen:
   Old McDonald’s pond, behind the barn, was frozen on Christmas day.

Why was the pond frozen?
   Old McDonald’s pond, behind the barn on his farm, was frozen on Christmas Day because the temperature fell to 0°.

To what extent was the pond frozen?
   Old McDonald’s pond, behind the barn on his farm, was frozen 2” thick on Christmas Day because the temperature fell to 0°.

Try expanding these sentence stems:

1. The road is long.
2. The day is hot.
3. Her dress is pretty.
4. His dog is fast.
5. The meal was good.
Pre-Writing:

Pre-writing interventions transition break-the-ice strategies into organizing techniques.
Strategy #7

- **TREES**
  - Give oxygen
  - Give wood

- **OXYGEN**
  - Important to: Humans, Plants, Animals

- **WOOD**
  - Used to build: Houses
  - Used to make: Paper, Furniture
Models:

Provide students with good models of the type of writing they are expected to produce.
Emerging Strategies

Two promising developmental writing strategies require more research

• Use of rubrics
• Vocabulary instruction
Implementing the Elements

Effective writing instruction acknowledges that the smooth deployment of the higher-level writing strategies depends on the innate use of lower-level skills of:

• Handwriting
• Keyboarding
• Spelling
• Grammar and Punctuation
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