



CENTER ON
INSTRUCTION

Identifying and Implementing Key Components of Effective Writing Instruction

Presented By

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CENTER ON INSTRUCTION

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Logistics

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- Send questions via the chat feature OR ask them directly during the question and answer portion of the call
- Today's webinar will be recorded and available for replay on the Center on Instruction website at a later date




AGENDA

- Welcome
- Synopsis of Writing Next
- Research on Effective Writing Instruction
- Questions and Answers
- Evaluation



Synopsis of Writing Next



SYNOPSIS OF WRITING NEXT: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE WRITING OF ADOLESCENTS IN MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

Although it has received less attention than reading, writing is a critical aspect of literacy and one in which effective instructional techniques and models for intervention are needed. Results from the most recent (2002) National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing exam of students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades indicate that the vast majority are not meeting educational standards for writing proficiency, with 72% of 4th graders, 69% of 8th graders, and 77% of 12th graders scoring at the Basic or Below Basic levels.

States and districts need assistance and direction based on the best available research in order to act broadly to remedy these deficits. This need for research-based guidance prompted Graham and Perin (2007) to compile a quantitative synthesis of the existing research on writing instruction, using the rigorous methodology of meta-analysis. Their results provide a foundation for selecting and implementing effective instructional methods. This synopsis of Graham and Perin's meta-analysis summarizes their findings and describes implications for practice with a particular eye toward interventions that have been shown to be effective with low-achieving students or those with learning disabilities (LD).

Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools – A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Also see: Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). A meta-analysis of writing instruction for adolescent students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99, 405-426.

METHOD & RESULTS

The studies analyzed by Graham & Perin involved students in grades 4 to 12 who participated in interventions focused on improving writing skills (learning to write) or learning content-area material through writing (writing to learn). The studies, from 1964 to 2005, used an experimental or quasi-experimental design and included a reliable outcome measure of writing quality; writing-to-learn studies also included a measure of academic achievement in a content area. Studies were eliminated if data needed to calculate an effect size¹ were not present. In all, 142 studies met these criteria, producing a total of 176 effect sizes. The studies were categorized according to the instructional method used and effect sizes were combined within each category to produce a weighted average effect for each.


This sorting process yielded eleven instructional elements with a statistically significant positive effect on writing quality across multiple studies. They are listed by the magnitude of their effectiveness. Instructional effects for students with LD or who were low achieving are reported for the 25 studies that provided sufficient data. The example study listed under each element is a resource for further information about what is involved in each aspect of instruction. Readers are also referred to the *Writing Next* document,

available at <http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf>, which highlights many of these studies.

INSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS

1. Writing strategies (ES overall=0.82, n=20; ES for low achieving students=1.02, n=9). Writing strategy instruction, as defined here, refers to specific instruction in planning, revising, and editing. Strategy instruction is an explicit method that involves teaching the sequence of steps necessary to complete a larger task. It involves instruction in processes such as collaborating with peers, developing self-regulation skills, and learning aids, such as mnemonic devices, to recall the strategies taught. Teaching writing strategies appears to be especially effective with low-achieving students. See De La Paz, S., & Graham, S. (2002). Explicitly teaching strategies, skills, and knowledge: Writing instruction in middle school classrooms. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94, 291–304 for an example of the studies in this category.² It offers an example for interested readers of the methods.

¹ For each of the 11 elements, one study included in the *Writing Next* document is referenced as an example of the types of studies included. These examples simply provide a starting point for readers who wish to learn more. See *Writing Next* for a complete list of the studies included under each element.


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Improving Writing: Results From Writing Intervention Research

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During this presentation...

- I present what we know about teaching writing to adolescents using 3 sources of scientific information – I will start with the findings from WRITING NEXT



Effect Size

- Effect Size provides a standardized measure of the quantitative differences between the two treatments, providing information on both the direction and magnitude of this difference.



RULE OF THUMB

- Effect size OF .80 is LARGE
- Effect size of .50 is MODERATE
- Effect size of .25 is SMALL



1. Strategy Instruction

- Involves explicitly and systematically teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and/or editing text. Instruction is designed to teach students to use these strategies independently. Writing strategies range from processes such as brainstorming (which can be applied across genres) to strategies designed for specific types of writing, such as stories or persuasive essays.



Strategy Instruction, cont'd.

- $N = 20$
- $ES = .82$



STOP

Suspend judgment

Take a side

Organize ideas

Plan more as you write

- Did I list ideas for each side?
- Can I think of anything else? Try to write more.
- Another point I haven't considered yet is...
- Put a star next to ideas you want to use.
- Put an X next to arguments you want to dispute.
- Number your ideas in the order you will use them.



2. Teaching Summarization

- Involves explicitly and systematically teaching students how to summarize texts. This can include teaching strategies for summarizing text or instructional activities designed to improve students' text summarization skills.
- $N = 4$
- $ES = .82$



Teaching Summarization, cont'd.

- Teach these 6 rules of summarization:
 - Delete unnecessary material
 - Delete redundant material
 - Compose a word to replace a list of items
 - Compose a word to replace individual parts of an action
 - Select a topic sentence
 - Invent a topic sentence if need be



3. Peer Assistance

- Involves students working together to plan, draft, and/or revise their compositions.
- $N = 7$
- $ES = .75$



4. Setting Product Goals

- Involves assigning students specific goals for the written product they are to complete.
- $N = 5$
- $ES = .70$



5. Word Processing

- Involves having students use word processing and related software to write.
- $N = 18$
- $ES = .55$



6. Sentence Combining

- Involves teaching students to construct more complex and sophisticated sentences through exercises where two or more basic sentences are combined into a single sentence.
- $N = 5$
- $ES = .50$



7. Process Approach

- Involves extended opportunities for writing; writing for real audiences; engaging in cycles of planning, translating, and reviewing; personal responsibility and ownership of writing projects; high levels of student interactions; creation of a supportive writing environment; self-reflection and evaluation; personalized individual assistance and instruction; and in some instances more systematic instruction.



Process Approach, cont'd.

- $N = 21$
- $ES = .32$



8. Pre-Writing Activities

- Involves students engaging in activities (such as using a semantic web or brainstorming ideas) designed to help them generate or organize ideas for their composition.
- $N = 5$
- $ES = .32$



STOP

Ssuspend judgment. Brainstorm ideas for and against the topic.

(For)

(Against)

• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____

Take a side. Place a "+" at the top of the box that shows the side you will take.

Organize ideas. Decide which ideas are strong and which ideas you can dispute.

Plan more as you write. Remember to use all four essay parts and continue planning.

Now write your essay on another piece of paper.



9. Inquiry

- Involves engaging students in activities that help them develop ideas and content for a particular writing task by analyzing immediate and concrete data (e.g., comparing and contrasting cases or collecting and evaluating evidence).
- $N = 5$
- $ES = .32$



Inquiry, cont'd.

- Example of Inquiry:
- Goal – Describe the action of people
- Analyze Data – observe one or more peers during specific activities
- Specific Strategies – Ask the people observed why they did what they did
- Apply – Write a story based on insights

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10. Study of Models

- Involves students examining examples of one or more specific types of text and attempting to emulate the patterns or forms in these examples in their own writing.
- $N = 6$
- $ES = .25$



11. Writing As A Tool for Learning

- Have students use writing as a tool for learning content material.
- ES = .23



12. Grammar

- Involves the explicit and systematic teaching of grammar (e.g., the study of parts of speech and sentences).
- $N = 11$
- $ES = -.32$



Recommendation for Struggling Writers

Teach handwriting, spelling, & typing to struggling writers



Single-Subject Design Research

13. Explicitly teach students strategies for constructing paragraphs (strong positive impact on schematic structure of paragraphs).

Example Strategy: (1) show the type of paragraph (describe, show sequence, compare and contrast, and cause and effect) they will write in the first sentence; (2) list details they plan to use; (3) order the details; (4) .write the details in complete sentences; and (5) cap of the paragraph with a concluding, passing, or summary sentence.



14. Teach Basic Writing Skills

- Explicitly and directly teach students basic writing skills, such as capitalization, punctuation, sentence construction, and so forth (small positive impact).
 - This involves the teacher modeling how to use the skill correctly, coupled with student practice applying it. In addition, taught skills are reviewed periodically.



15. Positive Reinforcement

- Reinforce positive aspects of students' writing (small positive impact). This involves providing social praise, tangible reinforcers, or both, as a means of increasing specific writing behaviors.



16. Students' monitor performance (small positive impact)

For example, students might be asked to count how many words they generate each time they write or determine if specific genre traits or elements (e.g., story parts such as setting, plot, action, resolution, and so forth) are included in their papers.



ROUND 3

- Study of exceptional teachers and schools
- Practice had to be applied by the majority of schools or teachers studied
- 10 practices that might make a difference



10 Practices that Might Make a Difference

- 17. Dedicate time to writing and writing instruction, with writing occurring across the curriculum.
- 18. Involve students in various forms of writing over time.
- 19. Treat writing as a process, where students plan, draft, revise, edit, and share their work.



10 Practices that Might Make a Difference, cont'd.

20. Keep students engaged by involving them in thoughtful activities (such as planning their composition) versus activities that do not require thoughtfulness (such as completing a workbook page that can be finished quickly, leaving many students off-task).
21. Teach often to the whole class, in small groups, and with individual students; this includes teaching students how to plan, draft, and revise as well as teaching more basic writing skills.



10 Practices that Might Make a Difference, cont'd.

22. Model, explain, and provide guided assistance when teaching.

23. Provide just enough support so that students can make progress or carry out writing tasks and processes, but encourage students to act in a self-regulated fashion, doing as much as they can on their own.



10 Practices that Might Make a Difference, cont'd.

24. Be enthusiastic about writing and create a positive environment, where students are constantly encouraged to try hard, believe that the skills and strategies they are learning will permit them to write well, and attribute success to effort and the tactics they are learning.



10 Practices that Might Make a Difference, cont'd.

- 25. Set high expectations for their students, encouraging them to surpass their previous efforts or accomplishments.
- 26. Adapt writing assignments and instruction to better meet the needs of individual students.



Questions?



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Sources

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