

Evidence-Based Writing Instruction
for Struggling Writers

Steve Graham
Vanderbilt University
steve.graham@vanderbilt.edu

- In this presentation, I present what we know about teaching writing drawing on scientific information
- STEP 1 – *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 sizes 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.

- 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

- 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.

- 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



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

- 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

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

Grammar

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

Recommendations for Struggling Writers

12. Teach handwriting, spelling, & typing to struggling writers

Single-Subject Design Research Recomm. – Struggling Writers

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. 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. 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.

15. 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 – Science Again

- 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

16. Dedicate time to writing and writing instruction, with writing occurring across the curriculum.

17. Involve students in various forms of writing over time.

18. Treat writing as a process, where students plan, draft, revise, edit, and share their work.

19. 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).

20. 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.

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

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. Set high expectations for their students, encouraging them to surpass their previous efforts or accomplishments.

25. Adapt writing assignments and instruction to better meet the needs of individual students.

Sources

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