

Strategy Instruction for Struggling Writers: Revising & Planning

Gary A. Troia, PhD, CCC-SLP
Michigan State University

PA Department of Education Conference
Pennsylvania Training & Technical Assistance Network

March 6, 2013



Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one was not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand.

George Orwell

The first four months of writing the book, my mental image is scratching with my hands through granite. My other image is pushing a train up the mountain, and it's icy, and I'm in bare feet.

Mary Higgins Clark

Setting the Context: Prior Research

- In the *Writing Next* meta-analysis, process writing instruction had a small treatment effect (ES of .32) and the studies were of lower overall quality; strategy instruction was superior (ES of .82)
- Compared with traditional writing instruction, process-based instruction yields higher quality papers and superior writing achievement on NRTs (Hillocks, 1984; Varble, 1990; Montieith, 1991)
- Process-based instruction typically has little impact on student writing motivation (Bottomley, 1999; Jackson, 1996; McKenna et al., 1995; Stahl et al., 1994; Pollington et al., 2001)
- There is great variability in how teachers enact a process approach, and this is influenced by their epistemological beliefs, experience, and teaching context (Lipson et al. 2000; Troia et al., 2011)

- The best writers appear to benefit from Writing Workshop, whereas less proficient writers make minimal gains; Matthew effects do not appear to be mitigated (Sandmel & Graham, in press; Troia et al., 2009)
- Transcription skills account for about 65% of variance in writing performance in the primary grades and about 40% in the intermediate grades (Graham et al., 1997), but systematic spelling and handwriting instruction often are not addressed in process approaches
- A focus on multiple components of self-regulation in writing through concrete goal setting, progress monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-talk is not typical in Writing Workshop classrooms

- What are Attributes of Effective Writing Instruction?**
- A predictable routine that permits each student to become comfortable with the writing process and move through the process over a sustained period of time at his/her own rate
 - A focus on authentic writing tasks and meaningful writing experiences for personal and collective expression, reflection, inquiry, discovery, and social change
 - A common language for shared expectations and feedback regarding writing quality (e.g., traits)
 - Lessons designed to help students master craft elements (e.g., text structure, character development), writing skills (e.g., spelling, punctuation), and process strategies (e.g., planning and revising tactics)

- Procedural supports such as conferences, planning forms and charts, checklists for revision/editing, and computer tools for removing transcription barriers
- A sense of community in which: (a) risks are supported; (b) children and teachers are viewed as writers; (c) personal ownership is expected; and (d) collaboration is a cornerstone of the program
- Integration of writing instruction with reading instruction and content area instruction (e.g., use of touchstone texts to guide genre study, use of common themes across the curriculum, maintaining learning notebooks in math and science classes)

- A cadre of trained volunteers to respond to, encourage, coach, and celebrate children's writing, which helps classroom teachers give more feedback and potentially individualize their instruction
- Resident writers and guest authors who share their expertise, struggles, and successes so that children and teachers have positive role models and develop a broader sense of writing as craft
- Opportunities for teachers to upgrade and expand their own conceptions of writing, the writing process, and how children learn to write, primarily through professional development activities, but also through being an active member of a writing community (e.g., NWP)

- What are Attributes of Quality Writing Workshop?**
- **STUDENT WORK:**
 - There are frequent opportunities for students to regulate their writing behaviors, the writing environment, and the use of resources
 - Daily writing occurs at school and home with students working on a wide range of composing tasks for multiple authentic audiences and purposes
 - Students select their own writing topics or may modify teacher assignments, which are compatible with students' interests
 - Students work through the writing process at their own pace
 - Students present work in progress as well as completed papers to other students in and out of the classroom to receive praise and feedback
 - Students' written work is prominently displayed in the classroom and throughout the school

- **INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH:**
 - Teachers intentionally adjust their instructional emphasis on meaning, form, and process to meet individual students' needs
 - Instruction covers a broad range of knowledge, skills, and strategies, including writing conventions, sentence and text structure, the functions and forms of writing, and planning and revising
 - Teachers overtly model the writing process, writing strategies and skills, and positive attitudes toward writing during teacher-directed mini-lessons
 - Follow-up instruction is provided to ensure mastery of target knowledge, skills, and strategies

- ROUTINES:
 - A predictable routine typically entails a mini-lesson, then an individual progress check, followed by independent writing and conferencing, and finally group sharing
 - Regular student-teacher conferences are scheduled to discuss progress, establish writing goals and self-evaluation criteria, and provide individualized feedback, all in the context of high expectations
 - Cooperative arrangements are established where students help one another plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish their written work
 - Teachers arrange for periodic conferences and frequent communication with families to discuss the writing program and students' progress

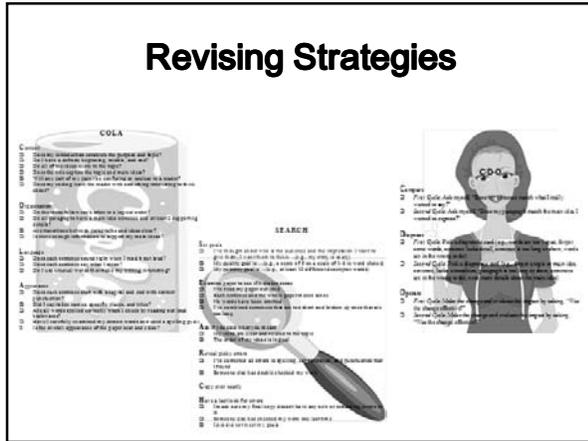
- ### What is Revising?
- Re-seeing goals, ideas, and text
 - Dissonance location and resolution
 - Occurs throughout the writing process
 - Metaphor of pruning and grafting

- ### Why is Revising So Difficult?
- Make inaccurate presuppositions regarding shared understanding
 - Focus on localized and superficial issues rather than discourse-level issues
 - Miss inaccuracies and confusing spots and/or do not know what to change when a problem is detected
 - Feel too wedded to text already produced
 - Difficulty managing revising along with other cognitive, linguistic, physical, and motivational operations
 - Little instruction is devoted to helping students revise
 - Teachers give limited helpful feedback on papers

How Can We Foster Effective Revising?

- Examination of touchstone texts and comparing these with weak exemplars
- Activities to develop genre and topic knowledge
- Extensive modeling
- Word-processing software
- Checklists (e.g., COPS, COLA, SEARCH)
- Peer and teacher conferencing
- Tactical procedures (e.g., goal setting, flash-drafting, CDO)

Revising Strategies



What is Planning?

- Developing goals and sub-goals to address rhetorical and task demands, writing purposes, and audience needs
- Generating (loosely or tightly) an initial set of writing ideas and organizational structures
- Occurs throughout the writing process
- Highly personalized and task-specific

Planning Strategies

SPACE LAUNCH

The parts of a good essay include:

- I → Introducing elements
- P → Problem
- A → Action
- C → Conclusion
- E → Emotional reactions

The steps to write a good essay are:

- I → I will introduce the topic
- A → I will give ideas to show my writing goals
- C → I will give my conclusion
- N → I will give my conclusion
- E → I will give my conclusion



DARE TO DEFEND

The parts of a good argument include:

- D → Develop a position statement
- A → Add supporting arguments
- R → Repeating, make counter-arguments
- E → End with a strong conclusion

The steps to write a good opinion paper are:

- D → Develop a list of ideas for my topic
- E → Evaluate their importance
- R → Read the ideas to convince my reader
- E → Encourage myself through self-talk
- N → Write the ideas in my own words, using my own words, and give impact
- D → Decide if I use my writing goals



TREE BRANCH

The parts of a good report include:

- T → Tell what your topic is and what's important with a good lead
- R → Repeat important and interesting facts about your topic
- E → Explain the facts with supporting data
- B → Branch out with what the reader wants to know

The steps to write a good report are:

- B → Brainstorm ideas words for my topic
- R → Repeat my facts to keep me going strong
- A → Ask myself if my ideas will cover my writing goals
- N → Now to be a reporter with good organization, powerful words, and accurate information
- C → Check to see if I cover up with more good ideas
- H → Have a close look at my paper for mistakes