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SELF-REGULATED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT: A COGNITIVE STRATEGIES
APPROACH TO PERSUASIVE WRITING

by
Amy I. Bennet

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved by

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ABSTRACT

Amy I. Bennet

SELF-REGULATED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT: A COGNITIVE STRATEGIES APPROACH TO PERSUASIVE WRITING

2004

Dr. Marjorie Madden

Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not the application of Self-Regulated Strategy Development model of writing instruction will improve the writing of persuasive compositions in seven 4th grade students. Self-Regulated Strategy Development pairs mnemonics representing the parts of different genres of writing with self-talk statements used by the students to "think" through the writing process. The students in this study were introduced to these strategies through small group instruction that took place during the regular school day. Through conferencing with the students, and by comparing the compositions written before the SRSD instruction to compositions written after the instruction, I hope to be able to determine if any improvement occurs in the students' writing. At the end of the study, it was determined that four of the students had improved, but two had not. The findings of this study suggest that through explicit instruction in the use cognitive strategies struggling writers can become proficient in the creation of persuasive compositions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, and foremost, thank you to my family. Mom: If you had not been on the other end of the phone telling me that I could do it, I would probably still be in a ball on my closet floor. Your unwavering love and support has helped lead me to this point. Dad: Thank you for helping me to become the person I am today. Melissa: You, too, were on the other end of that phone several times, and I appreciate you not hanging up on me (I think I might have). You kept me amused with stories of Morgan and the dogs; those stories made me a little less homesick. Katie: You were the one person I knew I could call on a tough day and talk to without being a blubbering mess by the end of the conversation. You always managed to make me smile. John: Thank you for allowing me to commandeer your computer. I promise one day I will get an operating system that has Word, and I will finally leave you alone. Except for dinner on Sundays, of course. Morgan: Your picture on my desk was a link to home that inspired me to stop procrastinating, so I could come home for the weekend.

Dr. Marjorie “Midge” Madden: Thank you for all of your patience and understanding. I do not think you knew what you were getting yourself into when you signed on to supervise “Co-teach” thesis research. You have been a reassuring presence throughout this ordeal. Thank you for everything.

Now, to my seven participants: I hope that all of my future classes have a “Peter”, “Michael”, “Joey,” “Vanessa”, “Brian”, “Riley” and last, but not least, a “Jimmy”. Thank you for all of your hard work and enthusiasm.

To my two cooperating teachers: I learned so much from the both of you. You

could have made January through May the most miserable sixteen weeks of my life; instead, you embraced both my research and me (arranging your schedules to suit my needs). Thank you for everything.

Finally, to Doreena, who shamelessly asked to be included on the acknowledgments page; thank you for all the stress relieving fun.

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Chapter One

"What is writing?" I asked, leaning close to my students. As I looked into their eyes, I held my breath in anticipation waiting for the insightful commentary that was sure to emerge during my students' responses.

"Well, I think writing is exercise for your hand!" Riley exclaimed.

"That's interesting Riley. Could you explain more about what you mean?" I asked.

"I can," an exuberant Jimmy shouted, almost jumping out of his seat, "Writing is like making your hand stronger, so you can have better handwriting..." he paused, "I need to work on my cursive."

"What about you, Peter, what do you think writing is?" I was almost afraid to ask.

"Writing is when you put letters together and make words and then paragraphs", Peter replied.

"I think Peter is right," Joey chimed in, "Writing is like paragraphs, and sentences. It's like when we copy from our textbooks, we write what it says."

"Any thoughts on writing, Michael", I asked as I turned in my chair to face him. Michael shrugged. "What does that mean?" I asked shrugging my shoulders as he had done.

Reluctantly he offered, "Writing is boring. If I didn't have to do it I wouldn't."

"Hmm...well, Brian, you haven't said anything yet. What about you?" I prompted.

"Well, see, I think writing is any kind of writing you do on a paper. It can be a persuading paragraph, which would be making someone change their minds," Brian answered.

"But writing is not just schoolwork; it's something that you can do to send someone a message, like a note or letter," Vanessa interrupted, calling from her seat at the table.

General Background and Introduction

The preceding conversation took place with students who participated in the writing group for my master's thesis research. It was our first meeting, and as I reflect back, this conversation seems to echo the thoughts of J.W. Lerner (1976) who noted that "poor facility in expressing thoughts through written language is probably the most prevalent disability of the communication skills" (p.266). It also appears to mirror the

current thinking about writing among students in the United States. The majority of students, as determined by scores on the National Association of Educational Progress's (NAEP) Writing Assessment in 2002, consistently test at or below the *Basic* level on the assessment. The NAEP's Writing Assessment measures the ability of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders to complete informative, narrative, and persuasive writing tasks in the forms of essays, letters, and narratives (Plisko, 2003). The compositions completed by these students are graded on a scale of zero to three hundred, divided into three sections: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*.

In 2002, approximately 130,000 fourth grade students completed the National Assessment of Educational Progress's Writing Assessment (Plisko, 03). The majority of these students, fifty-eight percent, scored at the *Basic* achievement level (Daane, Jin, and Persky, 03). This means that over half of the students who completed this assessment demonstrated only the basic knowledge necessary to create the required compositions. Although twenty-six percent, reached the *Proficient* level of achievement (Daane, Jin, and Persky, 03), that is only one percent over a quarter of the total number of students tested; more significant, the amount of students that tested out at the *Basic* level was well over half of the total amount of students tested (Daane, Jin, and Persky, 03). In all, the percentage of students who fell at the *Basic* and *Below Basic* levels was seventy-two percent. This means that 93,600 students out of 130,000 fourth grade students were not *Proficient* in writing according to the criteria established for their grade level.

For the past twenty years, Steven Graham and Karen Harris have conducted research in the use of cognitive strategies to improve the writing of children. They have developed a writing model known as Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD).

Self-Regulated Strategy Development has four main characteristics that deal with the level of explicit instruction of the strategies, the individualization of student learning, the collaboration of teachers and students during the process, and the type of instruction implemented under SRSD (Harris & Graham, 1993). Self-Regulated Strategy Development teaches students to become better writers through a six stage program that involves the discussion of, the modeling of, the scaffolding of, and the independent application of strategies geared to improve writing in specific genres. The strategies implemented through the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model focus on the planning, drafting, and revising of student compositions. The students use mnemonics and other "tricks" to facilitate them in the application of the SRSD model of writing.

Research Problem

My research problem becomes whether or not the application of Self-Regulated Strategy Development improves the writing of persuasive paragraph compositions in fourth grade students. Self-Regulated Strategy Development pairs mnemonics representing the parts of different genres of writing with self-talk statements. This combination is designed to provide students with cognitive strategies that guide them through their writing. Through conferencing with the students and by comparing the compositions written before the SRSD instruction to compositions written after the instruction I hope to be able to determine the effectiveness of Self-Regulated Strategy Development instruction on students' writing.

Significance of the Research

The fact that over half of the students tested during the 2002 NAEP's Writing

Assessment were unable to produce compositions at the *Proficient* level supports the importance of this research problem. Writing is a skill that students will use for the rest of their school career as well as into their adult lives. Being able to compose a well-written composition, whether it be a letter, story, or proposal, will factor into the level of success achieved by the student in the future. The planned intervention, Self-Regulated Strategy Development, will provide fourth grade students, both with and without learning disabilities, with writing strategies that have been proven effective for use in the planning, writing, and revising of persuasive compositions (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002a). The goal is to introduce the students to strategies that will improve their current writing, and prepare them for future writing tasks.

Overview of Methodology

The intervention that will be utilized in this study is Self-Regulated Strategy Development. This model will be employed to help students learn to apply cognitive strategies to their writing. Through the use of these strategies students will learn to thoughtfully plan, organize, draft, and revise persuasive paragraphs. The students will be trained to apply cognitive strategies to the writing of persuasive paragraphs through the six stages of Self-Regulated Strategy Development: activating the students' background knowledge, talk it out, modeling, memorize the mnemonic, support the students, and independent practice. These stages will be further discussed in chapter three.

In order to ascertain the results of this intervention I will be using several pieces of data: a researcher journal, the students' compositions, pre- and post-intervention writer inventories, and student-researcher interviews. The persuasive compositions written by

these students will be scored based on criteria from a rubric that was specifically designed for this intervention. The data collected during this intervention will be compiled into a qualitative report. The artifacts will be combined together to tell each student's story as a case study. Each case study will focus on an individual student and showcase his or her work; but more importantly will focus on their thoughts and feelings about the impact of Self-Regulated Strategy Development on their writing.

Limitations to the Research

The reality in an elementary classroom is that frequently anything that can happen to throw off even the best laid plans can and will happen. In other studies conducted on the SRSD strategy, researchers spent forty to sixty minutes per session, for four or five sessions, on each stage of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model. The time that was available for the intervention in the current study was thirty minutes a day, four days a week, for six weeks. These sessions were frequently canceled or shortened because of classroom activities for that particular day. The study would have been more effective if more time had been available to implement, *with more* explicit instruction, the strategies that are the core of Self-Regulated Strategy Development.

Along with the time limitation is the inconsistent attendance of students in the study. Some students missed several sessions and it was not possible to cancel or reschedule. Therefore some students have more completed paragraphs, and in essence more practice with the SRSD strategies. More consistent instruction would have created results that could be generalized across the group of participants.

What's Next

The NAEP's 2002 Writing Report Card states that over half of the students that participated in the 2002 NAEP Writing Assessment tested out at the *Below* proficient level. My interest in this phenomenon has led me to the discovery of research done by Steven Graham and Karen Harris in the use of cognitive writing strategies. I am interested in determining the effect of these strategies on the persuasive writing competencies of fourth grade students. In the next chapter, I will discuss research on Self-Regulated Strategy Development. This chapter will outline past successes of the SRSD strategies and further explain the significance of improving the writing of students. In chapter three, I will discuss the methodology; the procedures and lessons used during the implementation of SRSD. Also, I will describe the setting and participants of the study. Chapter four will contain the results of the study along with a discussion of those results. In chapter five, I will present the conclusions and implications of my research.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I will be discussing the problems faced by young writers as well as studies that have been completed on Self-Regulated Strategy Development. The first part of this chapter will focus on research that documents specific difficulties encountered by struggling writers. These impediments include impulsiveness and the lack of strategies necessary to compose within the structures required by different genres of writing. The research that has been done on these writing impairments suggests that they are caused by a combination of factors. These factors include both the instructional methods used by teachers, and the knowledge possessed by the students about the writing process. I have included information about these factors in the first section of this chapter.

After the discussion of the characteristics of struggling writers, I will be presenting four studies conducted on Self-Regulated Strategy Development. Although there are many uses for SRSD, I have only included those that are closely related to my research problem. The main focus of these studies is on improving the persuasive compositions of struggling writers. I have included these studies because they represent the success that has been achieved using SRSD. The methodology and results of these studies are briefly discussed in this chapter to provide support for my selection of Self-Regulated Strategy Development as the intervention executed in my study.

Writing can be considered a problem-solving process that requires the composer to create “visible, understandable, and legible language reflecting their knowledge of a

particular topic” (Hooper, de Kruif, Montgomery, Swartz & Wakely, 2002, p. 58). This task has become challenging for many young writers. When composing an essay, students are required to focus on his or her audience, and structure their essay in an organized fashion all while following the rules and regulations of writing (De La Paz & Owen, 2000). Young writers struggle to compose essays in a coherent logical manner that garners both praise and good grades from their teachers. This failure to please begins to take a toll on young writers; although they start school with a positive attitude towards writing, this gradually diminishes until writing becomes an unpleasant chore.

The inability of students to compose effective essays has been demonstrated time and time again on writing assessments, such as the National Association of Educational Progress’s Writing Assessment 2002, as discussed in chapter one (De La Paz, 2001). This is not a phenomenon that has been reserved for any particular segment of the American school population. Throughout the nation many schools have documented the inability of students to effectively compose informative, narrative, and persuasive essays, at the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade levels (De La Paz & Owen, 2000). According to the NAEP 2002 Writing Report Card, twenty-two districts that participated in the assessment scored lower than the national average (Daane, Jin, & Persky, 2003). These districts are located on the west coast of the United States, the east coast of the United States, in the North and in the South.

Students, especially students with learning disabilities, tend to answer writing prompts through knowledge telling. In response to prompts for persuasive essays students generally reply to the prompt as though they were answering a question orally (De La Paz, 1999). These responses are frequently equivalent to the length of an answer

that would be given orally to the same prompt; this is the result of students overestimating their writing ability (De La Paz, 1999; Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002). Instead of producing an essay that fully states and supports their opinion students write a quick response that tells what they know about the topic.

This knowledge telling approach is referred to as retrieve and write. Students typically respond to writing tasks by telling what they know about the topic without employing any planning or writing strategies (Graham & Troia, 2002). These responses tend to be unorganized and undirected. When students respond to prompts through the retrieve and write method they do not develop goals, effectively organize their text, stay within the constraints imposed by the topic, or consider the needs of their audience (Graham, Harris & Larsen, 2001; Graham & Troia, 2002). This lack of organization creates an essay that neither completely responds to the prompt nor engages the reader. Troia (2002) suggests that the lack of content contained in these compositions stems from the following reasons: (1) students do not possess the necessary knowledge to complete the composition; and (2) students are unfamiliar with the text structures required for specific genres of writing. However, it may not always be a lack of knowledge that causes these short responses. Graham (1990) found that students with learning disabilities generally spent an average of six to seven minutes creating persuasive compositions. However, he also found that, if prompted, these students could expand their responses between two and four times what they had originally written (Graham, 1990). This inclusion of new and useful information in these compositions suggests the need for more explicit writing instruction.

In writing instruction in today's schools, students are expected to learn the

strategies and skills needed to be successful by observing the teacher, and through repeated practice. Bridge and Heibert (1985) found that the main focus of explicit writing instruction was grammar, spelling, handwriting, and general writing mechanics. If students are not taught how to “think through” the writing process, they can not produce adequate compositions. The use of a strategic approach to writing such as Self-Regulated Strategy Development, that incorporates the use of modeling, guided practice, and independent writing, along with instruction in basic writing skills is needed both for students with and without writing difficulties (Troia, 2002).

Furthermore, students with writing disabilities and learning disabilities tend to be impulsive and suffer from low-task engagement, self-doubts, and memory problems (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002c). Students who write in an impulsive manner rarely plan before writing, have trouble generating ideas about the topic, and lack the organizational skills required to structure their text (De La Paz & Owen, 2000). The lack of planning for compositions severely affects the written products of struggling writers. Struggling writers rarely plan before composing, and plan very little when prompted by an instructor. Troia, (2002) found that planning can be broken down into a three-pronged process: (1) “formulating, prioritizing, and modifying goals to address the task, genre, and audience demands”; (2) “generating ideas”; and (3) arranging those ideas into a coherent manner that will “accomplish the established goals” (p. 251-252). Struggling writers often fail to complete all three parts of the planning process. Also, the manner in which these writers plan affects their final products. Rather than use a web or other planning techniques, struggling writers pour all of their knowledge, through the retrieve and write method, into a rough draft (Troia, 2002). This limits the students’ ability to

add to his or her compositions. As the student completes his or her “rough draft”, he or she has created a concrete full outline of the composition. The writer can only add new information if it fits into what has already been completed. Planning not only allows the writer to form ideas before writing, but makes the actual writing easier, because the writer does not have to pause to formulate ideas while composing (Troia, 2002). One of the main elements of Self-Regulated Strategy Development is a focus on planning. Teaching struggling writers how to plan is the first step in helping them become successful writers.

Self-Regulated Strategy Development

Self-Regulated Strategy Development was started as a way to provide students with significant learning difficulties with an approach to writing that focuses on the “affective, behavioral, and cognitive characteristics, strengths, and needs” of individual students (Graham & Harris, 1999, pp. 251-252). Gary Troia (2002, p. 254) wrote that, “strategy instruction provides children with cognitive routines for managing the complexities of writing tasks.” Self-Regulated Strategy Development teaches students to create persuasive compositions that are both logical and coherent. Graham and Harris (1993) found that through explicit instruction in the proper use of persuasive essay writing strategies, and self-regulation procedures, students become successful in producing persuasive essays that are of a higher quality. The higher quality of these essays is established through brainstorming, organization, and revision. The writing strategies that are learned through the SRSD model can be used to teach students to pick appropriate essay topics and structure their writing (De La Paz, 1999). By teaching students how to pick an appropriate topic and fully support it with their own ideas and

opinions, teachers can help reverse the negative attitude students have about writing. It is important that students realize how important writing is, because it is more than a way to communicate (Leroy & McIntyre, 2003). Through the use of well-organized and powerful essays students will be able to influence others, to persuade the reader to see things as the students see them.

In 1997, Susan De La Paz, worked with three fifth grade students to improve their persuasive essay writing. After interviewing the students' teachers, De La Paz determined that each of the students had difficulty both generating and organizing written ideas to include in their compositions (De La Paz, 1997). De La Paz chose to use the mnemonics STOP and DARE as part of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development intervention for this study (De La Paz, 1997). The mnemonic STOP stands for Suspend judgment, Take a side, Organize ideas, and Plan more as you write. STOP is a planning strategy that is implemented to help the students remember to form a plan before writing. The letters in DARE represent Develop your topic sentence, Add supporting ideas, Reject at least one argument for the other side, and End with a conclusion. DARE is used as a memory aide, to provide the students with a "trick" to remember the parts of a persuasive essay.

In baseline data collected by De La Paz (1997), the students generally did not plan or planned very little. De La Paz noted that the students spent no more than six minutes writing their baseline essays, and that the composition themselves were short in length and contained few ideas (1997). However, the post-treatment performances of these students showed far different results. After receiving instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development, planning became more important to two of the students (De La

Paz, 1997). These students began creating plans before writing their essays, and these plans contained forty percent of the ideas included in their essays (De La Paz, 1997). De La Paz (1997) noted that the essays themselves were more coherent and that for two students the essays doubled in length and for one student were three to four times longer. There also was an increase in the number of functional essay elements contained in each essay.

Overall, De La Paz found that students who were exposed to Self-Regulated Strategy Development improved their writing in several important ways. After receiving instruction the students created essays that contained more essential essay components, were longer than previously written essays, were written in a coherent manner, and were of a higher quality according to points awarded by De La Paz (De La Paz, 1997). These improvements were the result of the students planning before starting the essays, paying attention to what they were writing, and revising their finished essays. These improvements were positive and suggested that if the students were provided with the proper instruction they could create successful essays.

De La Paz's study was based on two previous studies conducted by Steven Graham and Karen Harris and by Graham, Harris, and Melissa Sexton. In the first study, Graham and Harris worked with three sixth grade students with learning disabilities to improve their persuasive writing (De La Paz, 1997). Before the intervention, the students spent little or no time planning before beginning to compose their essays (De La Paz, 1997). In order to combat these deficits, the researchers used a three-step writing strategy to plan for a persuasive essay: (1) Think, who will read this, and why am I writing it; (2) Plan What to say using TREE; and (3) Write and say more (De La Paz,

1997). (A quick note about TREE. The mnemonic TREE stands for Topic Sentence, Reasons, Examine reasons, and Ending. This mnemonic represents the elements of a persuasive essay, and was used as a memory prompt for the students in the study.) Post-treatment essays showed improvement in the student's planning. During the administration of the post-treatment essay, the students spent time planning their essays and they continued to plan, or Write and say more (step three of the strategy), while writing (De La Paz, 1997). Also, the students composed essays that "addressed the topic in greater detail and were more persuasive" (De La Paz, 1997, p. 228). Overall, the end results of this study were favorable. Through instruction in persuasive writing using the SRSD model, the students were able to improve both the planning and writing of persuasive essays.

In the second study, Graham, Harris, and Sexton (1998) used Self-Regulated Strategy Development to work on the planning and writing of six fifth and sixth grade students. Unlike the previous study done by Graham and Harris, this study incorporated the use of self-talk statements into the instruction. These self-talk statements are phrases or questions that the writers say to themselves during composing to help them remember the necessary elements of the essay and to guide them through the writing (self-talk statements are further discussed in chapter three). This study used the same three-step planning process as the previous study; the researchers also used the mnemonic TREE in this study to help the writers remember the parts of a persuasive essay. In this study, TREE was given a "real-world" link to help the students better understand the structure of persuasive writing, and the importance of all of the elements of a persuasive piece. The researchers compared the parts of a persuasive paragraph to the parts of a living tree.

T- the topic sentence of a persuasive paragraph is like trunk of a tree, because everything is attached to it, like all of the parts of a tree are attached to the trunk (Graham, Harris, & Sexton, 1998). R - the reasons in a persuasive paragraph are like the roots of a tree, because all of the parts of paragraph are attached to them, like all the parts of a tree are attached to the roots (Graham, Harris, & Sexton, 1998). E - the researchers explained to the students that they should examine the roots of a tree to be sure they are healthy, and they should examine their supporting reasons to be sure they are strong (Graham, Harris, & Sexton, 1998). Through the collection of baseline data, the researchers determined that students engaged in little or no planning, and if a student did plan it was completed in less than ten seconds (Graham, Harris, & Sexton, 1998). Graham, Harris, and Sexton (1998) stated the compositions created by the students contained a small number of words and ideas; the average number of words was between twenty and twenty-five for five of the students. The other student averaged seventy-six words per essay (Graham, Harris, & Sexton, 1998). The post-treatment essays composed by these students showed vast improvement from their pretreatment assessments. Three of students began using planning as a normal part of their writing process, spending eight to eleven minutes planning for each essay (Graham, Harris, & Sexton, 1998). Two more students not only planned for four to five minutes, but used the mnemonic TREE while writing their post-treatment essay (Graham, Harris, & Sexton, 1998). According to Graham, Harris, and Sexton (1998), the length of the students' compositions increased by one hundred twenty percent to two hundred ninety percent. As with the other studies completed on Self-Regulated Strategy Development, the results of this study are positive. The students made substantial progress in the genre of persuasive writing.

The final study on Self-Regulated Strategy Development that I would like to present is the one on which I based my own research for this study; it was conducted by Steven Graham, Karen Harris, and Linda Mason in 2002. These researchers implemented POW plus TREE as an intervention for three third graders. During this intervention, the students received instruction in persuasive writing using the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model in thirteen, twenty minute sessions (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002). The intervention was conducted by former special education teachers working on their graduate degrees (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002). The students were introduced to the mnemonics POW and TREE during the SRSD instruction (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002). POW stands for Pick your topic, Organize your notes, and Write and say more. The students are taught that by following the strategies in POW they will add POWER to their writing (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002). In this study, TREE represents something slightly different than in the other studies; it represents Topic sentence, Reasons - at least three, Examples, and Ending. Both of these mnemonics are further discussed in chapter three. This study followed the six stages of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002). These stages are: activate the students' background knowledge, talk it out, model, memorize the mnemonic, support the students, and engage them in independent practice. These stages are further discussed in chapter three. Before instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development the three students in this study were writing one or two sentence persuasive essays (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002). After completing all six stages of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model, the students were creating persuasive paragraphs that included all of the necessary elements, and structure for the genre

(Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002). The researchers noted that, “Sandy (one of the students in the study) clearly has the concept of an opinion essay, and has made the strategies she learned her own” (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2002, p. 77).

According to the studies previously completed by Graham, Harris, De La Paz, and Sexton, Self-Regulated Strategy Development has been highly effective in improving the writing of struggling students. All of the participants in the studies presented in this review showed improvement in their writing as a result of instruction in SRSD. The Self-Regulated Strategy Development instructional model emphasizes the use of cognitive strategies as a base for the writing process. It teaches the students to “think through” the process while writing. It also provides the students with mnemonics to help them remember the necessary components of a particular genre of writing. It is the solid foundation of Self-Regulated Strategy Development as well as the many successes achieved through the use of the instructional model that has led me to my research question: Will the use of cognitive strategies, particularly those introduced by SRSD, improve the persuasive writing of fourth grade students?

Chapter Three

General Methodology

A case study is "a detailed, in-depth examination of a person or people from a specific group" (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 120). Bissex sees the case study "as a genre of research that is particularly suitable for 'understanding, not controlling, human beings'" (Pierce, 1993, p.56). The case study is "a reflective story of the unfolding, over time, of a series of events involving particular individuals. The persons studied are regarded as full human beings, having intentions and making meanings, not merely behaving" (Bissex, as quoted in Pierce, 1993, 1993, p. 57). I have chosen the case study as the method of presentation for my results, because I feel that each of the students in this study has a unique story that will shed light on use of Self-Regulated Strategy Development. Through "storytelling" I will be able to take the reader into our research group, and he or she will experience the intervention along with the students and myself (Bilken & Bogdon, 1982). Each student has a story that will portray the true results of this intervention more effectively than if I were to break the results down quantitatively.

Bissex writes "the end of a case study should be insight, not control -- an understanding of others, and of ourselves, that helps us to be educators, not manipulators" (as quoted in Pierce, 1993, p. 56). The presentation of this material in the form of case studies will allow me to come to an understanding of each student's growth. The use of case studies will allow me to, as stated by Robert Stake, "tease our relationships between issues and participants, to probe the issues, and search for patterns

(or the lack of them), consistencies, and inconsistencies within certain conditions" (as quoted in Arhar, Holly, and Kasten, 2001, p. 260). By telling each of the students' stories individually, I can look at the information presented and then make the necessary comparisons between participants. This premise is supported by Pierce, who observes that "the case study method adds rather than narrows what the researcher must pay attention to, but has the advantage over other inquiry methods as a basis for rich, naturalistic generalization" (Pierce, 1993, p.56).

I will be using several different sources of data in order to triangulate my research. Hammersly and Atkinson note that "if diverse kinds of data lead to the same conclusion, one can be a little more confident in that conclusion" (as quoted in Pierce, 1993, p. 58). I will be analyzing my teacher-researcher journal, the student-researcher interviews, the writer's inventories, and the students' writing in order to interpret the results of the intervention. Once I have synthesized the information contained in these artifacts, I will be able to create a story theorizing the results of the intervention for each individual student. Through triangulation I will be able to "compare and cross-check the consistency of the information derived at different times by different means within qualitative methods" (Patton, as quoted by Pierce, 1993, p. 59).

Research Participants and Situation

As with most action research my study took place in the classroom. The classroom in which my study occurred is a fourth grade TAM, Team Approach to Mastery, classroom. A Tam classroom is an inclusion class; however, the approach to inclusion in this room is not the norm. Instead of the special education students in the room leaving to receive the necessary services there are two full-time teachers, one

Elementary Classroom Teacher and one Teacher of the Handicapped, in the classroom to meet the academic needs of these students. The only time the special education students are required to leave the room is for Speech Therapy or Occupational Therapy.

In order to create a learning community in a highly diverse classroom these teachers have set high standards for their students in both the academic and social realms of education. The diversity in this class is the result of many factors. These factors include, but are not limited to the socioeconomic status (SES) levels, races, and learning disabilities of the students in the room. The SES levels of the students in this particular class range from members of the working class to members of the upper middle class.

Another form of diversity that is present in this room is that of racial diversity. There are twenty-four students in the classroom in which my study took place. Nine of these students are African-American, one student is half African-American and half-Caucasian, one student is Hispanic, one student is Asian, and the other eleven students are Caucasian. Finally, the last form of diversity in this class that I would like to address is the type of learning disabilities served in the classroom. There are six students with Individualized Education Plans in the class. There are all diagnosed as having either Specific Learning Disabilities or Communication Impairments.

The intervention in this study did not include all twenty-four students in the class. After discussing the concepts and framework of Self-Regulated Strategy Development with the classroom teachers, they decided that there were seven students that could benefit from working with the strategy. These students had recently been working with persuasive writing as part of their Language Arts curriculum, and based on the samples of their work that I had seen I agreed with the teachers that these seven students in

particular would benefit from the intervention. The participants in my study were, like the class, a diverse collection of students. The participants were of different sexes, races, and SES levels. Also, two of the participants receive special education services. Five of the seven participants were boys, obviously making the other two female. Of the five boys, one was half African-American and half-Caucasian, one was African American, and three were Caucasian. Both of the female participants in the study were African Americans. The participants in my study were from two SES levels; they were either from the working class or the middle class. The participants in my study were also academically diverse. They were all within the average range of academics, although two are closer to high average while another three are closer to low average. Two of the participants in my study are Special Education students. Both of these students are male and are diagnosed as having Specific Learning Disabilities. The pseudonyms that I have chosen for the students in my group are in no way a reflection of their real names or their race. The names that I have chosen are Riley, Michael, Peter, Jimmy, Joey, Brian, and Vanessa. In the next chapter, I will describe these students in more detail as I present their individual case studies.

At this point, I feel that it is pertinent to the study to explain that there are only six case studies in the next chapter. Due to excessive absences, Riley completed only her pre-intervention paragraph. The lack of artifacts to showcase Riley's progress leaves me unable to provide conjecture about her progress as a result of SRSD. In order to sustain the integrity of this study, I have chosen to focus only on the students that completed at least three paragraphs, including the pre-intervention paragraph, during the intervention. These case studies are presented in the next chapter.

Procedures

STAGE ONE: ACTIVATING THE STUDENTS' BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

During this stage of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development writing process the students will be asked to share with the teacher what they know about persuasive essays. I have broken this stage down into three subsections in order to assist the students through the basic instruction of the stage.

Section one: Pre-intervention

This section contains both the first and second sessions of the intervention. During the first session, the students completed a pre-intervention essay on either one of two topics: (1) Do you think children should be allowed to choose their own pets; or (2) Do you think children should be required to clean their rooms? During this session, I noted the time that each student spent planning using a simple wristwatch. This was accomplished by requiring the students to ask me for composition paper after they had completed planning, and were ready to start writing. After the students completed his or her persuasive paragraphs I collected them, and students were asked to begin a "writer's inventory". I based the questions for my inventory on Ezra L. Stieglitz's "Writing Reflections Interview Form". This inventory asked the students questions that were related to writing. These questions included the following items: "Why do you write?", "How do you feel about the writing that you do at school?", "Do you plan before writing?", "How do you plan?", and "How do you organize your thoughts while you are writing?" The completion of the pre-intervention paragraph and the writer's inventory took the complete first session.

Section two: "Why do people write persuasively", and "What makes a good

persuasive composition?”

The first part of section two dealt with the question: Why would someone write a persuasive paragraph? In order to facilitate this conversation, I created a web of the ideas the students declared. These ideas were then compiled into a list, and referred back to throughout the course of the intervention. Once the students and I had established various reasons for composing persuasive writing, we moved on to the components of a strong persuasive paragraph. Through discussion, and the use of a white board to record the students' ideas, we were, as a group, able to ascertain all of the elements of a persuasive composition. These elements are topic sentence, reasons to support the topic sentence, examples to support those reasons, and a strong ending. At this point in the intervention, I introduced the students to the mnemonics POW and TREE.

Section Three: What are POW and TREE?

At this point in the intervention the students were introduced to the mnemonics POW and TREE. POW stands for Pick a topic, Organize your notes, and Write and say more (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002a). The mnemonic POW provides the students with a strategy for planning and organizing their writing. The students were taught that using POW would add POWER to their writing. The mnemonic TREE helps the students remember to include all of the important parts of a persuasive composition. It assists the students in remembering the important elements of persuasive writing, because it stands for Topic sentence, Reasons - at least three, Examples, and Ending (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 12/16/03). These mnemonics will be discussed in as much detail as necessary to accommodate all of the students in the group.

To further accommodate the learners in this group, I used a real-world link to

help the students remember TREE; I compared the parts of a persuasive paragraph to the parts of a living tree. I explained to the students that the topic sentence of a paragraph is similar to the trunk of a living tree, because all of the other parts of the paragraph are connected to the topic sentence; just like all of the other parts of a tree are connected to the trunk. The reasons in a persuasive paragraph are like the roots of a living tree. The roots of a tree support the trunk of a tree, like the reasons in a paragraph support the topic sentence of the paragraph. The examples that are included in a persuasive paragraph are also like the roots of a tree, because they support the reasons and the topic sentence of a persuasive paragraph. Finally, the ending of a persuasive paragraph is like the dirt that a tree is planted in. The ending holds the parts of a persuasive paragraph together just as the dirt holds the tree together. In order to help the students remember this analogy, I created a worksheet that contained a picture of a tree and, in words, the elements of a persuasive paragraph. As I introduced the connections between living trees and genre elements of persuasive writing I had the students fill-in the worksheet. I also labeled each of the parts of the six-foot tree picture on the wall with the appropriate elements of a persuasive paragraph.

STAGE TWO: TALK IT OUT

During this stage of the SRSD model the students and I will continue to discuss POW and TREE. Once the students had a firm grasp on the meaning of both of the mnemonics we began to apply them to previously written persuasive compositions. The students used these mnemonics to critique the essays and identify the components that make a good persuasive essay (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002a). This will help the students learn how to revise their paragraphs, because they will know what to look for

while writing and revising. Also, during this stage comes the all-important discussion of the students commitment to the Self-Regulated Strategy Development strategies (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002a).

During this stage of instruction, I also introduced the students to interest catchers, transition words, and "million-dollar" words. An interest catcher is an opening statement that the writer includes to "catch" the reader's attention. The interest catchers that I chose to use for this intervention were opening with a question, an anecdote, or a shocking fact. I introduced interest catchers by providing the students with examples, and then having them create their own interest catchers for the prompts we had answered during the first session. I introduced "million-dollar" words by having the students take mundane words, such as happy, and think of more captivating words to describe them. The introduction of transition words was accomplished through locating them in the text of previously written persuasive pieces, and finding places in those texts that could use transition words. The students were given worksheets on both types of words: transition and "million-dollar".

STAGE THREE: MODELING

The first step of this lesson is to review with the students the POW and TREE mnemonics. Next, I demonstrated how to write a persuasive essay. I did this using the topic: Should students be required to wear uniforms? At this time, I showed the students how to use each letter of the POW and TREE mnemonics while planning and writing a persuasive composition (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 12/16/03). In order to accomplish this feat, I demonstrated how to plan a persuasive paragraph using the graphic organizer that I created for the TREE mnemonic. Next, I modeled how to transfer the ideas from

the graphic organizer into a paragraph. During this part of the stage, I encouraged the students to help organize the essay. Finally, I demonstrated how to take the outline of the paper and fill it in to create a complete paragraph. After I completed the composition, I discussed with the students what they had observed while I was working. I was specifically looking for the students to point out that I had used reinforcing self-statements to help write the paragraph. At this point, I gave the students a true definition of self-talk, and gave them a worksheet that contained several example statements they could use. The students were also encouraged to create their own self-talk statements; although, they were welcome and encouraged to use any self-talk statements that I had used (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002). Next, the students and I created another paragraph together using all of the strategies of Self-Regulated Strategy Development answering the prompt: Write a paragraph convincing your parents to buy you a computer. After completing this paragraph the students all indicated that they were ready to begin composing their own “supported” paragraphs.

STAGE FOUR: MEMORIZE THE MNEMONIC

This lesson focused solely on the memorization of the mnemonics POW and TREE. In order to determine whether or not the students had memorized the mnemonics I had the students write down the mnemonics and what they represented on a piece of lined paper. The students' responses were all correct, and based on the explanations of the mnemonics, I determined they were ready to begin their writing on their own.

STAGE FIVE: SUPPORT THE STUDENTS

During this stage the students began to compose their own persuasive essays. The students were given two prompts and allowed to choose one. Next, the students

completed the TREE graphic organizer. After the students have completed the graphic organizer they will begin to compose their paragraphs. When they were finished planning, they raised their hands and I recorded the amount of time they spent planning. While writing, the students were allowed to keep the mnemonic cards and their self-talk statement, "million-dollar" word, and transition words worksheets on their desks. I provided the students with the help and guidance required to successfully complete their paragraphs. Each student completed at least one composition at this stage of the model. After the students completed their paragraphs we met for individual conferences, during these conferences we discussed their compositions, and the strategies they had used to plan and write the paragraphs.

STAGE SIX: INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

This is the last stage of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model. At this point the students are given the opportunity to apply all that they have learned about writing persuasive essays. The students planned their compositions without the use of the TREE graphic organizer, and they organized the paragraphs without the help of the teacher, mnemonic card, or their peers. During this stage the teacher only provided the students with help if it was required. The scaffolding has been lowered to minimal help at this stage in the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model. After the students completed their paragraphs we again met for individual conferences, during which we discussed their compositions and the strategies they had used to plan and write the paragraphs. At this point, I met with each student for an exit interview. This interview was conducted individually and focused not on an individual piece of writing, but rather on the intervention itself. The students and I discussed what they thought about the

strategies they had learned, and whether they believed these strategies had been helpful or not.

Data Analyses

K. Pierce (1993) states that "case studies tend to be qualitative and rely on the collection of naturally occurring data, but various procedures are used to collect the data" (Pierce, 1993. p. 56). In order to present the student's individual stories, I will be presenting their information in the form of thick description. Thick description is the "description of both the research content and methodology that is detailed enough to allow other people to compare the research to research done in other settings" (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 120). In order to provide the necessary details about the students I will be relying on several types of data. This data includes personal, methodological, and theoretical notes written in my researcher journal throughout the course of the intervention. These comments will allow me to assume the role of describer/connoisseur and traveler (Arhar, Holly, & Kastan, 2001). In research, the role of the describer/connoisseur is to "offer rich, thick descriptions of the major components of the research", while the traveler "puts you there as the story unwinds" (Arhar, Holly, & Kastan, 2001, p. 239). Through the comments scribed in my teacher-researcher journal, I will be able to include in the students' case studies a look at what the mood of students and myself were on a particular day of the study. I will also be able to include in their own words, comments made by the students about writing or Self-Regulated Strategy Development. I believe that this will provide the reader with a realistic view of the study and the participants.

Along with the analytic notes written my researcher journal, I will have

information regarding the students' feelings toward writing, if they believe they have made progress in respect to writing, and if they feel Self-Regulated Strategy Development has made an impact on their writing. This data will be collected at the end of the intervention as part of individual exit interviews. This information will be included in their case studies to represent their side of the story. My teacher-researcher journal will focus mainly on how I assess the students' progress, and their use of the strategies presented through the SRSD intervention. However, the exit interview will solely focus on how the students feel about their progress and the strategies they have been exposed to during the intervention.

Another piece of information that I will be considering during data analysis is the writing inventories completed by the students. Each student completed a writing inventory at the beginning and end of the intervention. This writing inventory was administered as a way to gauge the students' feelings towards writing. It includes questions that inquire about the purpose of writing and the processes used by the students during writing. The answers to these questions from before and after the intervention will be compared to determine if the students' attitudes towards writing, or the methods used by the students, have changed as a result of the intervention.

The data that I gather about the students' writing will be analyzed through several methods of reduction. One method will be the use of a rubric to determine whether or not the students have included all of the necessary elements of the persuasive writing genre. The students will receive either one or zero points for having or not having a topic sentence. They will receive one point for each reason they include in their paragraph, and one or zero points for including or not including an ending to their paragraph. By

looking at these scores, I will be able to determine if instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development has increased the students' ability to remember and incorporate all of the necessary components of persuasive writing in their compositions.

Another aspect of the students' writing that I will be looking at is whether or not the students plan before they write, and how much time the students spend planning for their compositions. In order to determine the time that students spend planning their persuasive pieces I will be using a wristwatch. I will begin timing them when they begin planning, and stop timing them when they raise their hands indicating that they are ready for their composition paper. Through instruction in SRSD the students should begin to use planning as a natural part of the writing process. If the students spend more time planning, or if they begin to plan when in the past they had not, this will indicate improvement in the writing process employed by these students, as a result of instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development.

An added factor of planning that I will be considering is whether or not the students continue to plan while they are writing. In order to determine whether or not this has occurred I will look for changes between the students' plans and the actual paragraph that they compose. The alterations that will portray a continuation of planning throughout the composition of the paragraph include the addition of ideas, the combination of ideas, and the rearranging of ideas (De La Paz, 1997). The students will receive one point for each change that is present in their paragraph. I will also record which kind of change has occurred to determine if the student favors one type of alteration over another. By comparing the points the students receive before the intervention to the score they receive after I will be able to determine whether or not the

Self-Regulated Strategy Development has been effective in generating continued planning in the study participants.

The last piece of the students' written compositions that I will be considering is the number of functional and non-functional composition elements included in their writing. Functional elements are those that directly support the development of the writer's argument (Graham, 1990). Nonfunctional elements include those ideas that do not support the writer's argument, and those ideas that are repeated for no apparent purpose (Graham, 1990). The number of functional elements in a written composition should outweigh the number of nonfunctional elements. For each paragraph composed by the students during this intervention, I will be tallying up the number of functional and nonfunctional elements. Through the instruction in SRSD, the students' ability to author compositions that include more functional elements than nonfunctional elements should improve. By comparing the students' baseline paragraphs to their final paragraphs, I will be able to determine whether or not they include more functional elements in their writing as a result of the intervention. In essence, I will be able to determine if the students are developing more ideas, reasons, to support their arguments as a result of the strategies learned through Self-Regulated Strategy Development.

What's Next

The previous sections of this chapter discussed both briefly and in detail the methodology that will be used in this study. The findings of my research will be discussed qualitatively in the form of case studies. Through the use of storytelling, I will present each case study in a way that portrays the experiences of both the participants and myself during this study. The story of each of the participants in this study begins in

detailed and thick description in chapter four.

Chapter Four: Case Studies

In this chapter, I will be presenting the results of my research as case studies. I have chosen to present these results in the form of case studies, because they allow me to portray more than the final results of the study. Each case study provides me with the opportunity to bring the participant's personality into the depiction of the results. I believe that it is necessary to represent the students' personalities, because they affected the dynamics of the group. The participants that I worked with were a very actively involved group. This ensured that SRSD would be instructed as it was intended to be instructed, through collaboration between the instructor and the participants.

I have divided the information I garnered during the intervention into three main subsections. I chose these subsections because they seemed to be the natural selections. As I was going through my teacher-researcher journal, the students' pre- and post-intervention writer's inventories the participants' compositions, and our exit interviews I noticed several reoccurring issues. Looking at those issues, I determined that they could be arranged to fit into the following three areas: (1) the students' thoughts on writing; (2) the students' actual writing; and (3) the students' thoughts on SRSD. Once I had determined the topics that would be discussed, I arranged each of the participant's artifacts into a logical order, and presented them in his or her individual case studies. The case studies are not presented in any particular order. The order is as follows: Joey, Michael, Brian, Jimmy, Peter, and then Vanessa.

Joey's Story

Joey's Thoughts on Writing

Question	Pre-intervention Answer	Post-intervention Answer
What is writing?	Writing is like paragraphs, sentences. Like when we have to write something.	Writing is a way to learn a lot of things. There is a lot to learn about writing, it is more than just exercising your hand. It is more than I think it is.
Do you plan before writing?	Sometimes yes or no	Yes
How do you plan?	No answer given	Well, first I think of the P in POW, that's when I pick my topic, and then I get my graphic organizer. That's what helps me plan.
How do you organize your thoughts while you are writing?	Sometimes I don't but the way I organize it is I draw a web.	Well the way I organize my notes is by a graphic organizer, and sometimes when I write some more ideas come to me. That's how I organize my notes.

As part of the requirements of being in my writing group, Joey was responsible for completing a writing inventory both before and after he had received instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development. Based on Joey's responses to the question "What is writing?", it is evident that the exposure to writing during this intervention has given Joey the opportunity to develop a better understanding of the complexity of writing. Joey now sees that writing is more than just a group of words strung together to make a sentence or a paragraph; it is a way to experience new ideas and information. Furthermore, as a result of the intervention, Joey has begun to use planning during the writing process. Before the intervention he often did not plan before writing. When he did plan, it was usually as a result of prompting by his teacher that led Joey to plan before

writing. After he completed the intervention, Joey wrote that he uses the strategies learned during the intervention to plan before writing. Unfortunately, I do not feel that Joey understood the question, “How do you organize your thoughts while writing?” because he answered it by explaining how he organizes his notes before he starts writing. He claimed that he uses a web to organize his notes and that sometimes more ideas come to him while he is writing. However, there is no mention of self-talk statements in the post-intervention response.

Joey’s Writing

Joey’s pre-intervention paragraph consisted of one long sentence, which he wrote in three minutes, and did not visibly plan for:

I think children should be able to chose their own pet, because it would not be fair to the children, but sometimes animals are dangerous so parents sometimes take force to pick cute animals than dangerous animals.

This sentence contained his belief that children should be allowed to chose their own pets, but it was not separated into a specific topic sentence; therefore, he did not receive a point for having a topic sentence. Joey included two reasons in his paragraph, so he received two points, one for each reason. However, it is important to note that the reasons he included in his paragraph contradicted each other, and one of the reasons contradicted his belief that children should be allowed to choose their own pets. The reason that supported his belief is recognized as a functional element of his paragraph. The reason that does not support his belief is categorized as a nonfunctional paragraph element. Therefore, he had one functional and one nonfunctional element in his essay. There is no ending to this paragraph. Joey simply finished his second reason and was done writing, so he receives no point for having an ending sentence.

Overall, Joey received only two of the five points available for having the appropriate parts of a persuasive paragraph. He was given the two topics that were available to choose from, picked one, and immediately began writing. Joey worked on his paragraph for three minutes and then handed it in; he did not preplan or proofread. He had written what he considered a complete response, and then he was done.

After receiving instruction in the first four stages of Self-Regulated Strategy Development [activating the students' background knowledge, talk it out, modeling, and memorize the mnemonic], Joey began creating paragraphs with the help of the other participants, the mnemonic cue cards, self-talk cue cards, and myself. The following paragraph was the first paragraph that Joey created during this stage:

Do you know why a friend should sleep over? Well, I do. I think a friend should sleep over, because we would become better friends by hanging with each other. We would have lots of fun by playing games and telling jokes. We might learn more by reading a book or by watching TV. That's why a friend should sleep over. Don't you think now?

Before beginning the actual writing of this paragraph, Joey spent five minutes planning for the paragraph. He completed his graphic organizer using note form like I had demonstrated during the modeling stage of instruction. He included in each of the reason boxes his reasons, and examples to support those reasons. He also jotted down the topic that he had selected in the topic sentence box on the organizer. Furthermore, Joey composed his ending sentence using the "Ending" box on his organizer.

After he had completed his organizer, Joey started composing his paragraph; he spent four minutes writing this paragraph. Unfortunately, the graphic organizer did not help Joey to create a topic sentence. Once again, he stated his belief in the paragraph, but not in a specific and recognizable topic sentence. Joey did not receive any points for

having a topic sentence in his paragraph. However, he did increase the number of reasons that he included in his paragraph. In this paragraph, Joey included three reasons to support his belief, and each of the reasons was supported by examples. Joey received three points for each of the reasons in his paragraph. These three reasons were functional elements of the paragraph. Unlike his pre-intervention paragraph, this paragraph contains an ending. The ending is not particularly strong, but it does let his audience know that he is finished with his argument, and once again states the topic of his paragraph.

There is an improvement between Joey's pre-intervention paragraph and this first paragraph, which was completed after partial instruction in SRSD. Joey spent five minutes planning for this paragraph, which is five minutes more than he spent planning for the previous paragraph. This planning is evident in the number of reasons, and functional elements contained in this paragraph as compared to Joey's pre-intervention paragraph. In his pre-intervention paragraph, Joey included only two reasons, one of which was a direct rebuttal to the idea he was arguing. In the first paragraph that he completed after some instruction in SRSD, Joey included the requisite three reasons, and all three supported the idea he was arguing in his paragraph. He also included an ending, which had been missing from his pre-intervention paragraph. In his pre-intervention paragraph, Joey garnered only two of the five points available for the parts of a paragraph. In his first paragraph, Joey received only four of the five available points. Joey included only one functional element in his pre-intervention paragraph; he included three in his mid-intervention paragraph. Unfortunately, Joey did not continue to plan while writing. There were no new ideas added, ideas combined, or any rearranging of

ideas between his graphic organizer and his paragraph.

After Joey had completed his paragraph, he and I sat down and discussed it.

During this conference I was able to ascertain, through conversation, that he was grasping the strategies that are a part of Self-Regulated Strategy Development:

Me: How did POW help you write this paragraph?

Joey: The O helped me organize my notes.

Me: After you had your notes organized, what did you do?

Joey: I wrote and said more.

Through Joey's responses to my questions, I was able to determine that he not only knew what the three parts of POW were, but how they were used. However, more important than the use of the mnemonic was whether or not Joey had employed self-talk statements while writing. Although Joey told me that he had used self-talk during the completion of his graphic organizer, and the composition of the paragraph, I was not sure he actually understood how self-talk was supposed to help. Until he made the following statement:

Joey: Then after reason two and examples I ... then ... I said, What did I have to do after reason two and examples, so that's when I thought of writing more.

Joey's writing continued to improve, and by the time he wrote his last independent practice paragraph he was including all of the parts of a persuasive paragraph, continuing to plan, and including only functional persuasive paragraph elements:

I think football is the best sport, because it makes you feel incredible inside. It makes you stronger, so when you get tackled, it toughens you up. It improves your coordination by helping your balance. Or maybe you'll get a scholarship so you don't have to pay for college. Now, I proved that football is the best sport.

The topic for this paragraph was self-selected, and it was hard for Joey to come

up with reasons to support his belief that football is the best sport. Joey spent fifteen minutes planning for this paragraph. He recorded his notes on a piece of paper that was split into sections representing each of the parts of a persuasive paragraph. Joey used the same type of planning for this paragraph that he had used during the earlier parts of the intervention. He wrote just the broad topic of the paragraph, football, in the topic sentence area on the lined paper. After picking his topic, Joey filled in each of the reason areas with a reason and examples to support the reason. As during planning for earlier paragraphs, Joey wrote out his full ending during the planning phase of this paragraph. Furthermore, with this paragraph, unlike the others, Joey showed continued planning during the actual writing of the paragraph. He added the idea that “football makes you feel incredible inside” to his paragraph while he was writing. With the simple addition of this phrase, Joey embraced, and employed, all of the strategies that are encompassed in Self-Regulated Strategy Development.

Joey’s paragraph included a topic sentence, three reasons, and an ending; he received all five available points for this paragraph. Furthermore, Joey received one point for having introduced a new idea into his paragraph while writing, a feat Joey had not yet accomplished. In his final paragraph, Joey created a composition that contained four functional elements, and zero nonfunctional elements. This is a definite improvement over his pre-intervention paragraph, which contained only two reasons, one of which was a nonfunctional element. In his pre-intervention paragraph, Joey used the classic knowledge telling strategy to respond to the prompt. However, after completing the SRSD intervention Joey was creating paragraphs that included all of the necessary parts of a persuasive paragraph, and he relayed them to the reader in a coherent fashion.

Joey's Thoughts on Self-Regulated Strategy Development

After he had completed his last paragraph, Joey and I sat down and talked about the strategies that are embedded in SRSD. The first topic we addressed was which of the strategies that he had used did he think was the most helpful:

Me: What do you think was the most helpful strategy: POW, TREE, or self-talk?

Joey: I think that POW was the most helpful, because it helped me pick my topic, when I was thinking of some topics. There were a lot of topics, so I chose what was the best topic, because I knew a lot about it. Also, it helps me organize my notes.

Me: What do you mean?

Joey: ...it was like the same as P in Pick your topic, I used it to organize my notes, my reasons.

Me: You were picking your examples and your reasons? Like you combined P and O?

Joey: Yeah.

Based on this discussion, I feel that Joey not only understands how to use the mnemonics that he learned, but that he has made them his own. The students did not receive instruction in how to combine steps, but rather were taught each one individually. Joey combined two of the steps; changing one to suit his needs. After our discussion of which strategy Joey felt was most effective, I asked him about self-talk:

Me: Joey, how do self-talk statements help you write?

Joey: Self-talk statements, they help me ... same thing as like the O in POW they help me organize stuff. Like, What should I do first? Like, I put something first like in the reasons or the topic sentence 'cause that's what you usually do first, so that's one that helps me. And what should I do now? , is one that helps me like in the middle of the paragraph. After I write the first part of the paragraph, I try to think of some more ideas, and that's what helps me, What should I do now? like think of more ideas.

Me: Okay Joey fill in the rest of this sentence for me, "When I use self-talk it helps me do this..."

Joey: It helps me improve my paragraph by helping me pick reasons and support examples for it and just think of a good ending.

Joey's responses to these questions about self-talk show that he clearly

understands the concept behind the strategy of self-talk and that he can use that strategy while writing. He knows that self-talk is something that you do in your head, while writing, to help you pull your thoughts and ideas together. He has described in his own words, how self-talk helps him write both in the beginning, middle, and end of his paragraph. I believe that Joey is combining self-talk and write and say more into the same strategy. He is using the self-talk statements to guide him through the development of new ideas, and through forming those ideas into actual statements in his paragraph. Joey's use of self-talk is apparent in his written work. By the end of the intervention, Joey was composing paragraphs that met all of the requirements for the paragraph, and he was continuing to plan while writing.

Michael's Story

Michael's Thoughts on Writing

Question	Pre-intervention Answer	Post-intervention Answer
What is writing?	Writing is boring to me. I would not write if I did not have to.	Writing is a challenge. It's hard and easy to put together.
Why do you write?	The reason I write is because I have to, but when I write stories it is fun.	I've written this week, because I'm starting to like it. I wrote all week as a matter of fact, because it's fun.
Do you plan before writing?	No, I don't.	Yes, I do.
How do you plan?	No answer provided.	I plan by using a web or graphic organizer.
How do you organize your thoughts while you are writing?	I write a sentence and think of another sentence.	I organize my notes by using POW, TREE, and Yes I'm Talking to Myself (self-talk statements) and transition words.

Michael's response to the questions, "What is writing?" and "Why do you write?" are perhaps the most satisfying of all my participants' responses. That his opinion of writing changed from something that is boring, something that he would avoid if possible, to a challenge that he is beginning to enjoy is more than I had hoped for when beginning this intervention. I simply expected Michael to learn strategies that would teach him how to plan and think through the process of writing; simply put strategies that would make it easier for him to write. I never anticipated a reversal in his opinion of the act of writing itself. After the intervention, Michael indicated that he plans by using a graphic organizer, and that he organizes his thoughts through the use of POW, TREE, and self-talk statements. By comparing this answer to the pre-intervention answer of "I

write a sentence and think of another” it can be implied that by the end of the intervention Michael was applying the strategies of Self-Regulated Strategy Development to his writing.

Michael’s Writing

Michael completed his pre-intervention paragraph in fifteen minutes, although, much of the time was spent staring at his shoe. When I asked him why he was not writing he responded that he was having trouble coming up with ideas. Michael did not visibly plan before he began writing; he simply sat, and thought, while trying to develop ideas. His finished pre-intervention paragraph is two sentences long:

I think children should be allowed to choose their own pets, because they would pick animals that would scare their parents. They would tease them about it.

Michael was awarded two points for having two reasons in his paragraph. Both of his reasons supported his topic sentence, so they are functional elements of the paragraph. His paragraph did not include any nonfunctional paragraph elements. Michael’s paragraph did not contain a topic sentence or an ending, so he received points for neither. All together he received two of the five points available for parts of a persuasive paragraph. Since Michael did not create a written plan before he began writing I can not determine whether or not he changed his paragraph while he was composing it.

The first paragraph that Michael composed, during the “support the students” stage of the intervention, contained all but one of the fundamental parts of a persuasive paragraph. He had a topic sentence and four reasons, but no ending. Michael received one point for the topic sentence and four points, one for each of his reasons, for a total of

five points. Michael's paragraph contained seven functional paragraph elements, and two nonfunctional paragraph elements. His paragraph reads as follows:

Hey mom would it be OK to have a friend sleep over? You would not have to watch me. You could do something like watch On Demand or something. You could go to sleep early. You would not have to wake up in the morning, so you could stay asleep longer. You would not be grumpy, because I would make you coffee in the morning. It doesn't stop there. You would eat breakfast as soon as you wake up. If you let a friend sleep over I will get better grades. Maybe even honor roll.

Michael planned for twenty minutes before writing his paragraph. He filled in his graphic organizer with notes like I instructed him to in the modeling stage of SRSD. Along with the notes he wrote on the graphic organizer, Michael wrote the mnemonic POW and what it stands for on the top of his graphic organizer. The notes on his graphic organizer were used to create the sentences in his paragraph; however, Michael did not stop planning after he completed his organizer. As he wrote the paragraph, Michael "wrote and said more". He added three ideas to his paragraph that were not on his organizer.

Unfortunately, Michael did not use the box designated for Ending on his graphic organizer for his ending. Instead, he used this box to fill in another reason. The fact that Michael did not fill in his graphic organizer correctly could be the reason that he is missing an ending for his paragraph. Another factor that may have affected his completed paragraph is the use, or lack of use, of self-talk. In a conference about his paragraph, Michael told me that he had not used self-talk:

Me: What self-talk statements did you use, Michael?

Michael: I didn't really use a lot.

Michael did not elaborate on his response. He looked down and to the side and

would not answer any more questions about the self-talk strategy. During this conference, I pointed out how self-talk statements would have made his composition stronger. I indicated that by not using self-talk statements, he had not prompted himself to go back and look at his writing to see what needed improving. I explained that if he had used the self-talk statements that he had learned, he would have realized that he did not have an ending for his paragraph, and that he then could have gone back and remedied the situation.

Overall, there was an improvement between the pre-intervention paragraph and the first paragraph that Michael wrote. As a result of the planning that Michael put into his first paragraph, he increased the number of reasons included in the composition to support his belief. The inclusion of these reasons raised the number of functional elements in his paragraph from two, in his pre-intervention paragraph, to seven. Michael also continued to plan while he was writing. As he composed his paragraph, Michael added three ideas to the paragraph that were not included on his graphic organizer. These ideas made his argument stronger because they supported his belief, his argument, that he would like to have a friend sleep over. Although Michael was still missing an ending for his paragraph, he included a topic sentence and four reasons, so he received five points for including several essential elements of a persuasive paragraph, as opposed to the two points he received for his pre-intervention paragraph.

The amount of time that Michael spent planning and composing his paragraphs during the intervention limited the amount of paragraphs he was actually able to write. Michael spent over half of a session planning for both of the paragraphs that he completed during the intervention. He also spent fifteen minutes and seventeen minutes,

respectively, composing his first and second paragraphs during the intervention. In essence, that means that Michael spent over a session completing each of his paragraphs. This would have been an acceptable amount of time, if I had not had to remove Michael from the larger group to an independent workspace, because he continued to talk after being asked to settle down and get to work.

Michael completed the following paragraph during the independent stage of the intervention:

Should students have to learn a second language? No, because it would be very hard to learn it. Even if they did learn a second language it would take a long time for them to learn it. The students would get real irate and hostile. If the students learned a second language they would not speak it. They would not meet who speaks it, and if they do, it would be a real long time, and they would forget it. And they would have to learn it again. It would be horrendous to learn a second language. If they learn a second language it would be hard. These students might tell their friends that they learned a second language. Their friends might laugh at them and they might get mortified.

Michael spent eighteen minutes planning for this paragraph. He made notes for each part of the paragraph, but did not include all of the parts; Michael has not included an ending for this paragraph. In his plan, Michael filled in notes for an ending, but did not transform those notes into an ending. In all, Michael received five points for this paragraph: one point for having a topic sentence and four points for including four reasons. Michael included seven functional elements and two nonfunctional elements in his paragraph. The two nonfunctional elements that Michael included were ideas that were either repeated or did not support his argument. Although Michael included elements that were not essential to the central argument of his paragraph, there is evidence of continued planning during the composition of the paragraph. Michael included three ideas that were not on his graphic organizer, and rearranged the order of

other reasons as he wrote his paragraph. The rearranging and addition of certain ideas to this paragraph made it difficult to follow. In order to understand the reasons and examples included in this paragraph, I asked Michael to explain the paragraph during a conference:

Me: Michael, do you have an example to support the students would get real irate and hostile?

Michael: That was it (the students would get real irate and hostile is the example) I just put it in a different order.

Me: So how would they get irate and hostile?

Michael: Cause they'll forget it and they wouldn't be able to talk to the person. Like they might be their friend.

After this conversation, I realized that Michael knew what he wanted to say in his paragraph, and he had examples to support his reasons; however, he had worded his paragraph in an odd fashion.

After conferencing with Michael I felt that, once again, he had not used self-talk statements to complete his paragraph. However, I do not believe it is a lack of understanding, or comprehension, of the point of self-talk that has caused Michael not to employ the strategy. Instead, I believe that Michael is using a self-taught strategy to guide him through the completion of his compositions. Unfortunately, this self-taught strategy is not effective enough to help Michael create strong persuasive compositions. Through more explicit instruction in the application of the self-talk strategy, perhaps Michael could have moved beyond understanding the theory behind the strategy to the actual employment of the strategy.

Michael's Thoughts on Self-Regulated Strategy Development

Michael was one of my most extensive exit interviews. He had a lot to say both about the mnemonics we had used during the intervention and the other strategies that

had been taught and used. I opened the interview by asking him to tell me what he had learned during the intervention:

Michael: I've learned a lot. POW and TREE. It's more than just a POW and TREE word. POW means pick your topic and organize your notes and write and say more. TREE is topic sentence, reasons - three, and examples and ending.

From this conversation, I learned that Michael had memorized the mnemonics we had been working with during the intervention, but I wanted to know more. I wanted to determine if Michael understood the purpose of the mnemonics, and the strategies behind them:

Me: How did learning these mnemonics help you write?

Michael: That helped me by, when I'm doin' my paragraphs, I think of POW, pick my topic, then my graphic organizer. I pick my topic, then I gotta organize my notes, but I gotta skip write and say more, 'cause that's for my paragraph I use write and say more.

Me: So you organize your notes first. Well when you're organizing your notes, what do you do?

Michael: I pick a reason. I come up with a reason, and once I pick a reason, I put down examples.

At this point in the conversation it was becoming apparent that Michael understood how to use POW to write a paragraph. He was able to verbalize in his own words how he uses the mnemonic to decide what he wants to write about, and to begin brainstorming ideas. Now, I decided to shift the conversation towards self-talk. I was interested in finding out if Michael understood the purpose of self-talk:

Me: What helps you do that? (Pick a reason and examples)

Michael: Yes, I'm Talking to Myself (self-talk statements).

Me: How?

Michael: I look at one of the first things that it says, what do I do first?, and like on my graphic organizer I gotta brainstorm ideas, and Let my mind be free. When I'm done my graphic organizer I go on to my paragraph.

Me: What do you use for the paragraph?

Michael - (after some prompting) The W. I brainstorm ideas ... more ideas. I gotta write and say more.

Me: What about in your head, what do you do in your head while you are writing?

Michael: In my head... well... I let my mind be free, ideas will come to me, my new ideas, and I can write more ideas on a paragraph and make it longer, and I gotta do like, the Yes, I'm Talking to Myself. They help me come up with answers and ideas, like for my paragraph and the graphic organize, if I'm stuck I just use like my Yes, I'm Talking to Myself and it gets me unstuck, and I know what to do then.

Ah, so there it was, Michael did understand the self-talk strategy. He could explain the theory of how using self-talk helped him write, but I do not believe that he actually used the strategy. If Michael had used self-talk in his writing process he would have created paragraphs that included all of the parts of a persuasive paragraph. Overall, I believe that Michael's writing improved, but not as much as it could have had he used all of the SRSD strategies.

Brian's Story

Brian's Thoughts on Writing

Question	Pre-intervention Answer	Post-intervention Answer
What is writing?	Writing is any kind of work on a paper.	People write to say things and to persuade.
Do you plan before writing?	Sometimes.	No answer. Although, he did answer the next question which is directly related to this one.
How do you plan?	I usually use a web or a list.	I plan by using POW, TREE, self-talk statements, and million dollar words.
How do you organize your thoughts while you are writing?	I might make a web to list my ideas.	By using POW, and by writing and saying more.

Although there is not much written in Brian's writer's inventories he has managed to say a lot. Unlike Michael, he did not have a great revelation and decide that he is beginning to enjoy writing. Rather, he changed his answer from explaining the writing he commonly does, "work on a paper", to why people write, "to say things and to persuade people". This answer leads me to believe that Brian not only learned strategies to help him write persuasively, but also became aware of why different forms of writing are important. Before the intervention, Brian stated that he "usually uses a web or a list to plan"; however, after the intervention Brian stated that he used the strategies learned during the intervention to help him plan. His answer demonstrates the effect of the intervention on the planning portion of Brian's writing process. According to Brian's pre-intervention writing inventory, he organized his thoughts while writing in a fashion that was similar to how he planned before writing, "I might make a web to list my ideas." However, this was not the case in any of my observations of Brian's writing. He did not

plan prior to composing, and he did not use any written form of organization while writing. After instruction in SRSD, Brian answered that he uses the strategies that he learned to organize his thoughts while writing. Based on the conversations and the paragraphs he constructed during the study, I believe that Brian began organizing his thoughts during writing using Self-Regulated Strategy Development models.

Brian's Writing

Brian's pre-intervention paragraph reads as follows:

I think children should be responsible for cleaning their room, since they are capable. They also are responsible for their actions. Plus their moms are not their names. That is why they should clean their room.

His pre-intervention paragraph garnered four points for containing a topic sentence, two reasons, and an ending. Brian's paragraph included two functional elements and one nonfunctional element. However, if Brian meant to write "nannies" and not "names" that sentence would have been another reason, and a functional, not a nonfunctional, paragraph element. Perhaps his mistake could have been avoided if Brian had proofread his paragraph before turning it in. Along with not proofreading his paragraph, Brian also did not plan before he began writing. Although Brian paused intermittently throughout the composition of his paragraph, he did not at any point create a written plan pertaining to the topic at hand. Overall, Brian created a good pre-intervention paragraph, and based on the effort he showed while composing this paragraph I felt that he had been an excellent choice for this intervention.

Brian created his strongest paragraph during the "support the students" stage of the intervention. It was the second paragraph that he created during this stage, and I had minimalized the scaffolding. He was still using a graphic organizer and the self-talk

statements cue card, but he was not receiving help from the other participants or myself. Brian spent seven minutes filling in the graphic organizer for this paragraph, and eleven minutes writing it:

Kids should get an allowance. We would get good grades. We would be happy, too. We could buy stuff and you don't have to give us the money. We would do chores for money. You would not have to clean or mow the lawn. This would be an experience to see if we are responsible. If we were old enough for an allowance I would not spend too much of it. I could get lunch with it. I could use it for emergencies. I could use it for a pay phone. I could use it for college. It will be easier for you if I got an allowance.

Brian received six paragraph points for this composition. He had a topic sentence, an ending, and four reasons. Brian's continued planning throughout the writing of the paragraph was apparent because there were four ideas added to his writing. Brian included many excellent examples as support for the reasons he included in the paragraph. These reasons and examples combined together to give Brian ten functional elements in this paragraph. Brian had only one nonfunctional element in his paragraph. During the conference about this paragraph, Brian explained the nonfunctional paragraph element:

Me: What do you mean by, "We would be happy, too?"

Brian: We would be happy like the parents.

Me: Is that because you get good grades?

Brian: Yes.

Unfortunately, Brian did not provide enough of a link between the reason and the example for it to be coherent. After he explained that the statement was an example for the reason, "We would get good grades."; it made much more sense. Unfortunately, that is not how it reads in the paragraph, so it becomes a nonfunctional paragraph element.

Given that this was Brian's strongest paragraph, I was curious to see what SRSD

strategies, if any, he had used:

Brian: The first reason was hard for me to get, because ... like this was really hard, so I just laid back and relaxed and the reasons came to me.

Me: Did you do anything else, to help you plan or write?

Brian: Yeah. Now, as I was writing this, I had something to add to make it stronger, and I put "We could buy stuff and you don't have to give us the money." That was all new. It didn't come from my graphic organizer.

Using the information that Brian provided during this conference, I ascertained that he was indeed using the strategies of SRSD. He was planning, using self-talk statements to guide him through the writing, and he was adding more to his compositions than what he had originally brainstormed.

Unfortunately, Brian did not do as well on his independent paragraph as he did on the second, supported, paragraph. Brian composed this paragraph during the last session of the study, and there was a lot going on that day. I had participants completing final paragraphs, completing writer's inventories, and doing exit interviews. This was different than the situation that Brian was accustomed to composing in. Normally, the group was quiet working on their individual paragraphs. After Brian had been planning for awhile, he raised his hand and asked me:

Brian: Even if your plan isn't that much, will your writing still be strong?

Me: As long as you write and say more.

Brian: Yeah that's what I meant.

Looking back on his comment I wish I knew then what I know now. Brian was asking about the plan, because he was having trouble coming up with reasons to support his topic. This final paragraph that Brian completed was on a self-selected topic that I am sure he thought that he could come up with many reasons to support, but in reality could not. He chose to write a paragraph convincing his mother to let him have a cell

phone. I should have told Brian that he should pick a new topic, but I thought he was just embracing the idea of “writing and saying more”. His final paragraph actually turned out to be the weakest that he had written since his pre-intervention paragraph:

Mom don't you think I should have a cell phone? If there was an emergency, I could call you. I would not have to use a pay phone. I would take responsibility. I am also old enough. I would use my allowance to pay the bills. If I was out you could call me to find where I am. I would help you a whole lot of ways.

Brian received four points for paragraph parts for this composition. He included a topic sentence and three reasons, but no ending for the paragraph. Furthermore, Brian’s final paragraph contained six functional elements and one nonfunctional element. That is four less functional elements than were contained in his strongest paragraph. Brian spent ten minutes planning for this paragraph; that is longer than he spent on any other paragraph during the intervention. Unfortunately, he spent only five minutes composing this paragraph. That is six minutes less than the time he spent on his strongest paragraph. There is no evidence of continued planning for this paragraph, as there are no changes between the plan and the paragraph. I believe that if Brian had had the chance to complete more independent paragraphs, they too would have developed to be as strong as the paragraph that Brian completed during the support stage of the intervention.

Brian’s Thoughts on Self-Regulated Strategy Development

Rather than use this space to provide you with the details of Brian’s exit interview; I would like to share a conversation I had with Brian after he completed his first “supported” paragraph. I am including the paragraph being discussed to facilitate understanding of the content of the conversation:

Mom can I go over to Brandon's to sleep over? It would be a joyful time. We could play before we go to sleep. You could just watch TV until you fall asleep.

You could spend time with your friends and my dad. You don't need to watch where we are, because we are friends so you can feel safe. You know the number to the house, so if something is wrong you could call. We could camp out to learn something about nature. It would be a chance to experience nature. I could have fun, and you would be free. You don't have to watch me. You could relax and have fun. It will be a blast to have fun.

Me: Tell me about the self-talk statements that you used for this paragraph.

Brian: OK, well, first I used "What do I need to do first?"

Me: And what did you decide you needed to do?

Brian: Pick a topic.

Me: Then what did you do?

Brian: I said, "Now, that I am picking my topic, what do I do now?", and after that I decided "What do I do?", I pick one reason, and my reason was I would have a joyful time, and then I decided to say, "Take my time and relax a good idea will come to me."

Me: What kinds of things did you say to yourself while you were writing your paragraph?

Brian: Did I write and say more? I also added some words into it.

Me: Million-dollar words?

Brian: Yes that's where I got experience.

Through this conversation with Brian, I established that he fully understood the strategies of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development writing process. He was able to walk me through the construction of his paragraph from plan to finished product, and tell which specific self-talk statements he had used while writing. Further proof of Brian's commitment to the use of self-talk statements was established during his exit interview:

Me: What do you think of self-talk statements?

Brian: They're good, because I use ... I find ... I mark them down sometimes when I use them. So, I found I been working with them a lot that now, I just added my own, cause I use it a lot. Mine is "How can I make this into a sentence?"

Me: Brian, you used POW for something outside of group didn't you?

Brian: Yes, on a reading test. I think I got an A.

Me: Did you use self-talk on your reading test?

Brian: No, but I think they probably would've made it better. I am going to start using self-talk statements in every single subject where I have to do writing.

Brian was the only participant in my group who created his own self-talk

statement. His self-talk statement was simple, but I believe that it would have helped other participants, like Joey, who had a lot of trouble forming a topic sentence once he had picked his topic. The commitment that Brian showed to the strategies of SRSD is the reason why he was able to create such strong paragraphs. By claiming ownership of the strategies that he was being taught Brian steered himself towards success.

Jimmy's Story

Jimmy's Thoughts on Writing

Question	Pre-intervention Answer	Post-intervention Answer
What is writing?	An exercise for your hands.	Writing is a fun thing to do.
Do you plan before writing?	Yes and no	Yes
How do you plan?	No answer	Talking to myself statements.
How do you organize your thoughts while you are writing?	Sentence by sentence.	By talking to myself.

Before Jimmy took part in this study, he considered writing “an exercise for your hands.” However, after the intervention Jimmy wrote that he considers writing “a fun thing to do.” Jimmy’s opinion of writing, that it is exercise, mirrors the idea of several other students in the group who also consider writing to be exercise or boring. Like these other students, Jimmy’s opinion of writing changed during instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development. According to Jimmy, before the intervention he occasionally planned before writing. However, after the intervention he stated that he does plan. In answer to the question, “How do you plan?”, Jimmy did not include an answer on his pre-intervention writer’s inventory. Then, on his post-intervention inventory Jimmy claimed that he planned by using “talking to myself statements.” This answer shows that Jimmy cognitively plans before writing, although he did not include any hints as to how he records the plans he creates by talking to himself. Based on conversations I had with Jimmy during the study, I do not believe that he filled in his post-intervention writer’s inventory with complete answers that reflected the knowledge he gained during the study. Therefore, I can not truly gauge what Jimmy learned, and what he did not, by these inventories.

Jimmy's Writing

Jimmy completed his pre-intervention paragraph on the first day of the study. He spent twelve minutes composing his paragraph, although he did no visible planning. Throughout the time that Jimmy spent writing his paragraph he often stopped and stared out of the window. When I asked Jimmy what was wrong, he looked at me and sighed, "I'm just trying to think of a closing sentence." In the first twelve minutes of this study, Jimmy wrote the following paragraph:

I think that kids should not choose the pet for them. Do you? Yes or no? More people will lean towards no. Will you let your kids choose? Thank you for listening to me.

The paragraph that Jimmy composed contained four nonfunctional elements and one functional element. His paragraph also included a topic sentence and an ending. This means that Jimmy received only two of the five available paragraph points. However, he did not include any reasons to support his belief that kids should be allowed to choose their own pets. Jimmy did not create a written plan for this paragraph; therefore it was impossible to determine if he continued planning while he was writing. The lack of reasons included in Jimmy's first paragraph led me to believe that: (a) he was either not going to be an active participant in the study or (b) he did not understand what should be included in a persuasive paragraph.

I was relieved to discover as the students and I began to tackle the strategies contained in Self-Regulated Strategy Development, that Jimmy was one of the most actively involved participants in the study. From the very beginning of the study, when we discussed why people write persuasively, to the end when the students shared their opinions of SRSD, Jimmy was outspoken and enthusiastic. When I introduced the

mnemonic POW, and told the group that if they used POW it would add POWER to their writing. Jimmy stepped in and told me that he knew what the e and r could stand for:

Jimmy: I know what the e and r can stand for: e - erase your mistakes and r - rewrite.

The addition of these two letters became a common element of our sessions. I would ask the students to tell me what POW stands for, and then I would say, "Okay now what do e and r stand for?" Several of the participants in the group took the SRSD strategies and twisted them to make them their own, but not as Jimmy and Peter did (more about Peter later). Jimmy added his own twist to POW, and then shared it with the rest of the group. He saw something that would make the writing process easier and shared with the whole group in order to benefit everyone. Along with the sharing of ideas during group, Jimmy was the first participant to transfer the POW strategy into other writing. In Jimmy's reading class, the students were creating shape poems, and he used POW to help him complete it. The effort that Jimmy put into our writing group is clearly evident in his final independent paragraph.

Jimmy's final paragraph, was on a self-selected topic. He chose to persuade his parents to allow him to get a dog:

Mom and Dad do you know why I should have a dog to play with? Well, they will be fun to play with. They will play fetch, play dead, sit down, and lay down. They will sleep with me. They will sleep with me in the living room, my bedroom, in the den, and downstairs in the basement. Puppies will be born if you have a female. They will probably be little, tiny, they will be very light, and they will be a little slow. That is a paragraph about why I should have a dog.

In his final composition, Jimmy constructed an adequate persuasive paragraph. Although Jimmy's composition did not reach the level of "strong" persuasive paragraph, it was still an improvement from the beginning of the study. He included a topic

sentence, an ending, and three reasons. He gained five of five points available for including each part of the persuasive paragraph in his composition. Compared to his pre-intervention paragraph, which contained no reasons, the inclusion of three substantial reasons in his final paragraph, shows an improvement in the recognition of paragraph parts. Jimmy's pre-intervention paragraph contained four nonfunctional paragraph elements, and only one functional paragraph element. This final paragraph, contained six functional paragraph elements and zero nonfunctional elements. That is an increase in functional paragraph elements and a dramatic decrease in nonfunctional paragraph elements.

The final effect of this intervention on Jimmy's writing is the use of planning. Jimmy did not plan before writing his first composition and struggled to complete it. However, Jimmy spent six minutes planning this last paragraph and seven minutes writing it; Jimmy did not hesitate or struggle while writing. That is eleven minutes total, one minute less than he spent composing his pre-intervention paragraph. I believe that his prewriting plan allowed him to create a stronger paragraph in less time. Although Jimmy assured me that he did write and say more while writing, it is impossible to determine if he did by looking at the plan and the paragraph, because there are no changes between the two. During the actual writing of his paragraph Jimmy did not added any new ideas to his original plan. Overall, Jimmy showed much improvement between the beginning and end of this intervention.

Jimmy's Thoughts on Self-Regulated Strategy Development

During the exit interview, Jimmy appeared very uncooperative. He answered few questions about Self-Regulated Strategy Development, so I have also included statements

made during paragraph conferences to portray Jimmy thoughts on SRSD. After Jimmy completed his first paragraph during the “support the students” stage of the intervention (He was writing to persuade his parents to let a friend sleep over.), we had the following conversation:

Me: What is your third reason?

Jimmy: We will go upstairs and ... leave our parents alone.

Me: Where is that written down?

Jimmy: Oh, I forgot to write that down.

Me: What kinds of things did you say to yourself while you were organizing your notes?

Jimmy: Like first, second, third, and last and ending.

Me: Did you use any self-talk statements?

Jimmy: No.

Me: You only have four paragraph parts, and you need five to write a strong persuasive paragraph. What do you think we should work on for the next part?

Jimmy: Self talk.

After this conference with Jimmy, I was concerned that he was not going to make the full commitment to the use of the self-regulation strategies that are essential to succeed in this intervention. Through his statements, it appeared that Jimmy was simply going to use the planning aspects of SRSD, but not the cognitive writing strategies. He was obviously using POW and the TREE graphic organizer to compose his paragraphs, but he was not self-monitoring his writing through the use of self-talk. After Jimmy completed his second supported paragraph, persuading his parents that he should receive an allowance, we again conferenced about the strategies he had employed while writing:

Me: Jimmy, your paragraph contained all of the five parts necessary to make it a strong persuasive paragraph. What kind of self-talk statements did you use while you were writing?

Jimmy: I used ‘My next step is’ ... ‘Let my mind be free’ ... ‘Take my time, relax, and good ideas will come to me’ ... ‘What do I need to do first’.

Me: Did you use any other self-talk statements?

Jimmy: I used ‘I did it’ and ‘Can I add more to make this part stronger?’

Jimmy had memorized a few of the self-talk statements, but could he use them as they were intended to be used; I was uncertain. I was not sure if Jimmy really understood why self-talk was a part of the intervention. He had told me earlier that the self-talk strategy helps you write better, but he was unable to tell me how the strategy helped. Then during our, very short, exit interview:

Me: Has self-talk made it easier for you to get through a paragraph?

Jimmy: Yeah, because when I write stuff on the thing, and I let my mind be free to think of some more ideas sometimes the ideas come to me.

Although Jimmy's explanation was not as eloquent as other students' explanations of the self-talk strategy, at least I knew that Jimmy understood the concept of self-talk. Jimmy's explanation of self-talk led me to believe that he had taken ownership of the SRSD strategies, and it was his final paragraph that truly proved it. Jimmy created a paragraph that included all of the necessary persuasive elements, and presented them in a coherent fashion. His progress, and commitment, from pre-intervention to final paragraph made Jimmy's and my experience, during this intervention both successful and satisfying.

Peter's Story

Peter's Thoughts on Writing

Questions	Pre-intervention Answer	Post-intervention Answer
Do you plan before writing?	I sort of don't like to.	I do, because it helps you brainstorm.
How do you plan?	I like to do a web.	I really like to create a big web or graphic organizer.
How do you organize your thoughts while you are writing?	I do sentence by sentence.	I put them from the past to the present.

Peter's response to the question, "Do you plan before writing?", on the writer's inventory indicates that before the intervention he did not enjoy planning. Unfortunately, Peter did not indicate why he dislikes planning on his inventory, so I can not comment on any specific strategy in the intervention that may have led to his change of opinion.

Perhaps the repeated exposure to, and practice with, planning led to Peter's change of mind towards planning. After the intervention, Peter indicated that he plans because it helps him brainstorm. In order to facilitate his planning, Peter indicated that he uses a web or a graphic organizer. The addition of a graphic organizer to his method of planning is a new technique that Peter included after the intervention. The main form of planning done during the intervention was completing a graphic organizer with the notes needed to compose a paragraph. This apparently had an effect on Peter's writing.

According to the answers provided by Peter on his writer's inventories it seems that the biggest influence on his writing during this intervention was the use of planning. The inclusion of planning in his writing process was from the beginning to the end of the intervention a pillar of support for Peter's writing.

Peter's Writing

On the first day of the study, Peter created the following pre-intervention paragraph:

Do you know why we shouldn't have to clean our rooms? I think we shouldn't have to because we do enough work and it's not fair. We do too much work for them also were tired from school. That's why I think we shouldn't have to clean our rooms.

Before he began writing, Peter created a web that contained four reasons branching off from a main topic circle, in this circle, Peter had written, "room cleaning is not required". As he composed his paragraph, Peter combined two of his reasons, we do enough work and it's not fair, into one sentence. He also combined the ideas "we do too much work for them" and "we're tired from school" into one sentence. The combination of these ideas in his paragraph earned him two points for continued planning while writing. Unfortunately, the reason "we do too much work for them" is not expressed in a clear fashion. The lack of clarity in this statement causes it to become a nonfunctional paragraph element. That brings Peter's total number of nonfunctional paragraph elements to two. The paragraph also contains two functional paragraph elements. Peter earned five points for having a topic sentence, an ending, and three reasons to support his argument. Peter did not have four reasons in his paragraph, although there were four in his web, because one was a nonfunctional element, and it is not considered a reason.

Peter was the only participant to include the five requisite paragraph parts in his pre-intervention paragraph. I believe that this is a direct result of the plan that he had created before writing. Peter used his plan not only to brainstorm ideas, but as a guide while he was writing his paragraph. As he was composing Peter crossed off each of the

reasons on his web; this allowed him to keep track of which ideas he had used and the progress that he was making.

Peter, Peter, Peter! He planned before he wrote, he referred back to his plan while writing, he changed his plan while he was writing, and he included all of the parts of a persuasive paragraph. All of this was done in the pre-intervention paragraph, before he received instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development. Not only was Peter putting forth twice as much effort in his writing as most of the other participants, but also he was an active contributor to group discussions. For example, Peter answered the following question, Why do people use persuasive writing:

Peter: To get them to buy your product.

OK, so that was not exactly the answer I was looking for, but considering that he had just composed an advertisement for a product, and a letter trying to persuade a company to buy his product, in his writing class, he was on the right track.

On the day that I introduced the mnemonics POW and TREE, I did not just tell the participants what they stood for, I tried to engage them by having them guess what the letters could mean:

Me: What about you Peter, do you have a guess?

Peter: I think POW, maybe, might be Persuasive Outstanding Writing.

Me: Not exactly, although if you use POW you will get Persuasive Outstanding Writing.

Persuasive Outstanding Writing became the informal version of the mnemonic POW. I would ask the students to tell me what POW meant, and then I would ask them to tell me what we would get if we used POW. Peter is a very sensitive child. I feel that the permanent inclusion of his version of POW helped firmly embed him in the activities

of the study. If I had laughed at him and told him that his idea was ridiculous I would have lost him. Instead, the group embraced his idea, and he embraced the mnemonic POW. This is evident in his use of the mnemonic while writing. When he composed his first paragraph during the “support the students” stage of the intervention he wrote POW on the top of his organizer, so he could refer back to it.

Peter continued to create strong persuasive paragraphs throughout the intervention. All of his paragraphs contained topic sentences, endings, and at least four reasons. These paragraphs contained more functional elements than nonfunctional elements; with two being the highest number of nonfunctional elements contained in any of his paragraphs. Peter’s dedication to planning remained strong, and he produced paragraphs that contained both added ideas and ideas that had been combined. By the time Peter had completed his second paragraph during the “support the students” stage of the intervention he had a firm grasp on the strategies of SRSD, but he still needed to work on including examples in his paragraph. By the time Peter wrote his final paragraph during the “independent” stage of the intervention, he was using more examples than in previous paragraphs:

Mom and Dad do you think I could play hockey? They give you all of the equipment. They give you a stick, shoulder pads, kneepads, a puck, skates, and also a helmet. Also the registration is free. Another extraordinary reason is I'll be losing weight, because I'll be skating. Also, another terrific thing is that...I'll be really occupied. Playing hockey will give me something to do, so I won't be bothering you. And if I'm good enough I can get a scholarship. It will benefit you and me, because I'll be so energetic you won't have to make me go outside. So I feel it would extremely miserable to not let me play a sport!

In this paragraph Peter included all of the required parts of a persuasive paragraph. He included both a topic sentence and an ending. Along with those elements,

Peter included six reasons; of those six reasons, only three were not supported by examples. This is an improvement from other paragraphs in which he included four reasons, but only had examples to support one. Altogether, Peter received eight points for having the correct parts of a persuasive paragraph: six reasons, a topic sentence, and an ending.

There are eight functional elements in this paragraph and zero nonfunctional elements. Peter's inclusion of functional elements over nonfunctional elements was consistently strong throughout the intervention, so this is not a dramatic improvement; although, it is the first paragraph which contained zero nonfunctional elements. Along with a strong showing of functional elements, Peter continued to plan while he was writing.

As he was writing this paragraph, Peter included two ideas that were not on his organizer; they were added ideas. Peter received two points for these additions. Not only did Peter "Write and say more" by adding ideas, but also by making minor adjustments to the wording of his paragraph. In several parts of the composition, Peter changed the words in his plan to better fit in with the ideas and flow of his paragraph. For example, Peter wrote that, "I'll be losing weight, because I'll be skating." However, on his plan Peter had written that he would lose weight by running. The use of the word skating over running fits better into a paragraph about hockey, because in the game of hockey you skate not run. Peter's final paragraph was strong and well-written. He was able to create an argument that showed how playing hockey would benefit both him and his parents.

Overall, throughout the instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development Peter was an upbeat participant who tried his best to succeed. He worked hard and improved

the parts of his writing that were weak. Unfortunately, I do not believe that Peter had enough time to work on the inclusion of examples in his writing. There was improvement in this area, but not as it should have been. With more time, and instruction, Peter could have written paragraphs that contained examples for each of his reasons.

Peter's Thoughts on Self-Regulated Strategy Development

After Peter completed his second paragraph during the “support the students” stage of the intervention we had the following conversation:

Me: Can you tell me what self-talk statements you used while you were writing?

Peter: I used ... uh ... I used ... (no response)

Me: Have you been using your self-talk statements?

Peter: I used a couple of them.

Based on this conversation, I decided that Peter was not employing all of the strategies contained in SRSD. He seemed to be avoiding the use of self-talk in his writing. He claimed that he was using it to guide himself through the process, but he could not say which statements in particular he was using, or how he was using them. During this conference, I explained to Peter that he was doing excellent work on his paragraphs. However, I felt that they could be stronger if he used the following self-talk statement: “What can I add to make this part stronger?” This particular self-talk statement would improve Peter's writing, because he would be prompted to develop examples to support his reasons.

As the intervention progressed, the paragraphs that Peter was composing began to include more added ideas and thoughts. After he had written his last paragraph, Peter and I sat down for his exit interview:

Me: Do you think you've learned anything about writing? Do you think POW, TREE, and self-talk has helped?

Peter: Yes.

Me: What helped the most?

Peter: I think it was the self-talk statements.

Me: Tell me about self-talk statements, how do they help you write?

Peter: Because you are thinking to yourself, and while you're doing that you're also brainstorming, so you can come up with ideas for your paragraph.

Me: Anything else?

Peter: It was helping me do the steps while I was going through.

This conversation allowed me to gain an understanding of how Peter viewed self-talk statements. It seems that Peter had an understanding of the theory behind self-talk, and was able to explain how it applied to his writing. Peter claimed that it helped him to think through his writing, which is the function of the strategy of self-talk statements. Unfortunately, his explanation did not provide me with enough detail to determine whether or not Peter was applying the strategy effectively. Peter was creating strong paragraphs, but based on his pre-intervention paragraph they could have been a result of planning alone.

Based on Peter's pre-intervention paragraph it seems as though he may have been using the self-talk strategy before he received instruction in SRSD. The pattern of writing that he followed in his pre-intervention paragraph is similar to that that is used in Self-Regulated Strategy Development. It could be the reason that Peter was unable to identify the self-talk statements that he used to compose his paragraphs. He was using his own statements and did not realize it. I feel that this would have been an interesting idea to study further, but time restraints did not allow me to delve into the topic.

Vanessa's Story

Vanessa's Thoughts on Writing

Question	Pre-intervention Answer	Post-intervention Answer
What is writing?	Writing is something you can do to send a message.	Writing is something you can talk with.
Do you plan before writing?	Yes.	Of course, to see what I'm writing in case of I don't know what to say.
How do you plan?	I usually do a web.	With a web and an organizer.
How do you organize your thoughts while you are writing?	After I do my web I look at it and see what sentence I can make.	Write and say more, pick your topic, organize your thoughts.
What would you like to improve about your writing?	I would like to write more exciting things and words.	POW and TREE. I need to be more exciting and put some more oomph into my writing.

Before she received instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development, Vanessa stated that she would like to, "write more exciting things and words." In her post-intervention answer to the question, "What would you like to improve about your writing?", Vanessa wrote an answer that was similar to her pre-intervention answer, only this time she used a more exciting word. She wrote, "I need to ... put some more *oomph* into my writing." Oomph, hmm that's an exciting word. Another answer that I found "exciting" was also on Vanessa's post-intervention inventory. Vanessa did not simply say that "yes" she plans, she wrote that, "Of course," she plans. She also provided an explanation of why she plans "to see what I'm writing." Furthermore, Vanessa's post-intervention answers not only explained why she plans before writing, but also how she continues to organize her thoughts while writing. Vanessa wrote that she uses pick your

topic, organize your thoughts (notes), and write and say more (POW) to coordinate her thoughts while she is writing. However, through conversations with Vanessa, both during and after the intervention, it is apparent that POW is the only strategy that she employed while writing to help her organize her notes. There is no mention of self-talk on her writer's inventory, and she did not refer to them during conferences on her writing. The answers that Vanessa wrote on her post-intervention writer's inventory reflected the six weeks that she had spent learning about Self-Regulated Strategy Development. She was able to indicate which strategies she had used while planning and writing during the intervention. Although Vanessa was able to list the strategies that she had used during her writing on her post-intervention inventory, it was through conversations during conferences that she was able to truly portray her understanding of the strategies of SRSD.

Vanessa's Writing

Vanessa came to the first session of this study with a good attitude and a willingness to work. The effort she put into her pre-intervention paragraph showed the promise of success throughout the duration of the study. Before she began composing her pre-intervention paragraph, Vanessa spent three minutes creating a web that contained the reasons she intended to include in her paragraph. Each of these reasons was contained in a circle that branched off of the main topic circle, which held the idea, "should children pick pets". Using the three reasons from her web Vanessa created the following paragraph:

Yes, I think children should pick their own pets. If they don't they may be scared of the pet. I am not saying parents/adults are dumb, but some parents/adults would get the wrong food. Just like me, my mom bought a dog and I hate it, so I

am saying some children may not like the pet.

Vanessa completed this paragraph in nine minutes. As she was writing, she frequently referred back to her web. As Vanessa wrote, she crossed off the reasons on her web that she included in her paragraph. Each of the ideas that she developed during her brainstorming session was included in her paragraph, all together she received three points for having three reasons in her paragraph. Vanessa received one point for having a topic sentence in her paragraph, but did not include an ending, so received no points. In all, Vanessa received four points for including four parts of a persuasive paragraph in her composition.

Vanessa was one of only two students that planned for their pre-intervention paragraph. In addition to the points that Vanessa received for including the parts of a persuasive paragraph, she also received a point for continued planning. As she composed her paragraph, Vanessa included an example that was not on her plan to support one of her reasons. She added that her mother had bought a dog and that she does not like it, to support her reason that some children may not like the pet that their parents choose. The concrete plan that Vanessa had before her as she was writing allowed her to change and add to her paragraph to better support her argument.

Vanessa's pre-intervention paragraph was also well-written in respect to functional and nonfunctional paragraph elements. By well-written, I mean that Vanessa included more functional than nonfunctional elements in her composition. She included five functional elements and one nonfunctional element. Her ability to write a paragraph that included more ideas to support her topic without contradicting it, or repeating it for no apparent reason remained strong throughout the intervention. In fact, Vanessa did not

write a paragraph that contained more than one nonfunctional element at any point during the intervention.

During the introductory sessions of this intervention, Vanessa was an avid participant. She was always willing to share her ideas with the group, and was not shy about voicing her opinions about any particular aspect of the group. One of the most interesting comments that Vanessa made during group pertained to million-dollar words:

Me: Why do we use million-dollar words in our writing?

Vanessa: You use them to like jazz it up.

As with the boys who had added to and changed up POW, “jazz it up” became the new catch phrase for million-dollar words. Most often, I would have Vanessa share why million-dollar words were important to writing, because none of the other participants could say “jazz it up” with the enthusiasm and conviction that Vanessa could, although they all referred to million-dollar words as a way to jazz up your writing.

Unfortunately, as the sessions of the intervention progressed through the stages of Self-Regulated Strategy Development Vanessa began to lose interest in the group. The success that I thought she would achieve at the beginning of the intervention did not seem possible as the effort she was exhibiting began to dwindle. This lack of effort became readily apparent when it was time for the group to compose their first paragraph during the “support the students” stage of the intervention. As I announced that the time had come for the students to begin composing their own paragraphs, Vanessa groaned the following statement:

Vanessa: Oh, not a paragraph.

This was not a simple, “I am groaning, but I am going to do my best anyway”, it

was a preview of the effort that Vanessa was going to put into the rest of the intervention. For the final paragraph that Vanessa composed, her second paragraph during the “support the students” stage of the intervention, she planned for twenty-five minutes, although much of that time was spent talking to other group members not planning. When she started composing, Vanessa spent twenty minutes writing her paragraph. Unfortunately, the time that Vanessa spent planning and writing the paragraph was not reflected in the paragraph itself:

Mom and Dad don't you think children should have allowances, because they do so much? For example, we clean our room every week. In fact, when you go shopping I take the groceries out of the bag and put them into the refrigerator. As soon as were all done that I could go outside and rake the leaves, and clean the garden. Plus, I could clean the house and floors, so we could have a guest. Allowance would be very amusing.

This paragraph contained only three of the five requisite parts of a persuasive paragraph. Vanessa had included a topic sentence, an ending, and one reason. She included a plethora of examples to support her reason, although she believed that several of the examples were reasons. The realization that Vanessa was confused about the difference between reasons and examples had occurred earlier in the intervention. After she completed her first paragraph during “support the students”, Vanessa and I sat down together and rewrote her paragraph including examples to support her reasons. Based on this paragraph it is obvious that Vanessa was still struggling with the concept of reasons versus examples.

As with her other paragraphs, the number of functional paragraph elements outweighed the number of nonfunctional elements six to one. Unfortunately, Vanessa did not show any signs of continued planning in this composition. In both of her other

paragraphs, Vanessa showed continued planning, whether it be the addition of ideas or a rearranging of ideas. On the whole, the final paragraph that Vanessa completed during the intervention did not show much improvement over her pre-intervention paragraph.

Vanessa's Thoughts on Self-Regulated Strategy Development

Vanessa was hard for me to figure out. During conferences about her writing, she would rattle off the self-talk statements that she had used, and her writing was holding steady; it was not getting worse, but it was not improving either. She was confused about reasons and examples, but we were working together to distinguish between them. Unfortunately, this was not accomplished early enough in the intervention to have a profound effect on Vanessa's writing. After the first paragraph Vanessa composed during the "support the students" stage of the intervention we had the following conversation:

Me: What self-talk statements did you use?

Vanessa: I used "what should I do first?"

Me: What did you decide you needed to do first?

Vanessa: Umm ... pick a topic.

Me: What other self-talk statements did you use?

Vanessa: Since I decided to put my topic sentence first, I will write it as the beginning of my introduction.

Me: One statement that I want you to use is, "What can I add to make this part stronger?", because that's where your examples are going to come in. When you're looking back on your writing, and you reread your reasons and your examples, and you think of something else that you can add to support your reasons.

Based on this conversation, I believed that if Vanessa employed self-talk statements she would be able to create paragraphs that included strong reasons and examples to support them. Unfortunately, Vanessa did not choose to utilize the self-talk statement strategy. The following is part of the conversation that took place during her exit interview:

Me: Did you use any self-talk statements at all?

Vanessa: No, not at all.

Me: Do you think that they would have help?

Vanessa: Yes.

Me: Then why didn't you use them?

Vanessa: Umm ... because at that time I was till confused with like reasons and stuff, and I didn't know which ones went with what.

Me: If we could go back six weeks and start over again, what would you do differently?

Vanessa: I would understand it better.

Me: How?

Vanessa: Like pay attention more.

Okay, so the ball was dropped. I tried to hand Vanessa the SRSD strategies, but she could not quite grasp them all. They needed to be broken down into smaller bits, and used one at a time. Worst than that was my roll in the confusion. She tried to hand the ball back, tried to tell me that she did not understand the concepts, but I was so blinded by her pre-intervention paragraph that I assumed she would just understand the strategies. I thought that Vanessa would just take the ball and run with it. Adjust the strategies to fit what she was already doing, and create strong persuasive paragraphs. In answer to my own question: If I could go back six weeks and start over again, I would spend more time explaining the self-talk strategy to Vanessa. I would do more modeling paragraphs with her before she began composing her own, so she would have a better understanding of how to use the strategy. I would give Vanessa the chance to create the paragraphs that I believe she would have been composing had she understood all of the strategies encompassed in SRSD.

All in All

The Group's Compositions

Each of the participants in this study wrote an average of three persuasive

paragraphs. Between their pre-intervention and final paragraphs, Michael, Joey, Jimmy, and Peter made an improvement by including three more paragraph parts in their final paragraphs, than they had included in their pre-intervention paragraphs. The inclusion of these three parts brought each of the participants up to five paragraph elements. By the end of the study, Joey, Jimmy, and Peter were creating compositions that contained all of the requisite parts of a persuasive passage: a topic sentence, three reasons, and an ending. Michael improved his inclusion of paragraph parts in a slightly different way. He did include three more parts than in his pre-intervention paragraph, but adding more reasons did it. Michael's final paragraph consisted of a topic sentence and four reasons, but no ending. In contrast to the other four boys, Brian did not show any difference between the number of paragraph parts in his pre-intervention paragraph and his final paragraph; he included four parts in each paragraph. However, it was a different component that was left out of the pre-intervention paragraph and post-intervention paragraph. Brian's pre-intervention paragraph was missing a reason, and his final paragraph was missing the ending. As opposed to the other participants, Vanessa lost a point between her pre-intervention and post-intervention paragraphs. Her pre-intervention paragraph contained a topic sentence and three reasons, but no ending. Vanessa's final paragraph contained both a topic sentence and an ending. Unfortunately, she only included one reason to support her argument. In all, her final composition only garnered three points for paragraph parts, while her pre-intervention paragraph had earned four points. Overall, four of the participants in this study increased the number of persuasive elements contained in their writing.

The Strategies

The strategies of SRSD are designed to assist students in both the planning and writing of his or her compositions. Although there are many strategies that can be used in the Self-Regulated Strategy Development writing process, I chose to work with the mnemonics POW and TREE and self-talk statements. POW was the most widely used and understood strategy of the intervention. During the study, each of the students referred to POW and how it applied to his or her writing. Several participants explained in vivid detail exactly how they had employed POW. However, the same can not be said for TREE and self-talk statements. Only Michael referred to the mnemonic TREE during the intervention. During his exit interview he stated that, "TREE is more than a TREE word." This passing reference is the only time that TREE was brought up by a student. Moreover, when I would ask the participants about POW and TREE they would pass over TREE and begin to tell me about POW. Self-talk statements were the toughest strategy for the participants to fully comprehend. For most of the study, the participants could provide the basic definition of self-talk statements; that they were statements that a writer thinks in his or her head while writing, but they could not tell me how or why they were beneficial to the writing process. Furthermore, three of the participants admitted to me that they had not used self-talk while composing the first paragraphs in the "support the student's" stage of the intervention. Of these three students, one never did use the self-talk strategy during the intervention. Based on the comments of the participants in this study, it appears that POW was the preferred, and most commonly employed, strategy in this intervention.

Up Next

In this chapter, I presented the results of my intervention. I conveyed the stories

of the study's participants through the use of case studies. In each of the individual studies, I presented the participants thoughts on writing, the paragraphs they had composed, and their opinions of the POW, TREE, and self-talk strategies. The final paragraphs of this chapter were dedicated to a breakdown of the studies results. In chapter five, I will be discussing the implications of this research. The first implication that I will discuss, is how Self-Regulated Strategy Development affected the participants of my study that were classified as having learning disabilities. After looking at their results, I will talk about the implications of these results on all students with learning disabilities. I will also look at further research that could be conducted to determine the effects of Self-Regulated Strategy Development in different situations. Through the discussion of further investigations on Self-Regulated Strategy Development, I will address what this study means for the teaching and learning of writing.

Chapter Five

The first part of this chapter focuses on the effect of Self-Regulated Strategy Development on students with learning disabilities. In this section, I discuss Jimmy and Peter's development as writers as a result of instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development. I also discuss how the stages of SRSD allow students with disabilities to grow as writers. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss questions that I have developed about Self-regulated Strategy Development as a result of this study. The questions that I have developed about these aspects of Self-Regulated Strategy Development could be used to provide a variety of students with a version of SRSD that would meet their individual needs as developing writers. These questions range from investigations of the writing processes employed by students before they begin instruction in SRSD to research on the actual strategies of SRSD and the use of these strategies by students. Specifically, I look at how gender, student participation, the personal adaptation of the strategies by students, the level of difficulty of the strategies, and the students' personal writing strategies affect the outcomes of the studies. Questions about SRSD are not the only questions that came to mind while I was conducting my study. Another aspect of writing instruction that must be considered is how teachers themselves are taught to provide instruction in the writing process.

Jimmy and Peter

Jimmy and Peter were the only special education students in my writing group. The teachers selected these students for the same reason that they selected the other

students, because they felt that the boys could improved their writing. In order to compare their writing from before to after the intervention I will look at the some of the same aspects as before: time spent planning for the composition and the number of functional and nonfunctional elements in their writing. However, I will also be looking at a different aspect of their writing. I will be considering the number of ideas contained in their paragraphs. Ideas differ from reasons in one important way: an idea does not need to directly support an argument; therefore it could be either a reason or an example. I have included the number of ideas contained in the paragraphs, because one of the main impediments faced by students with learning disabilities is that they have trouble generating ideas while writing. Including the number of ideas that Jimmy and Peter generated for their paragraphs will either show an improvement in their writing or it will not.

I will continue to compare time spent planning and functional and nonfunctional elements, because students with learning disabilities rarely plan and often lack the organization skills necessary to create a fluent, coherent passage (De La Paz, 2000). Instead of planning, students with learning disabilities often respond to a prompt through knowledge telling. Knowledge telling is the process by which writers simply take what they know about a topic and write it out on paper. This written product is often the same as a response that would be given orally. It neither fully responds to the topic being addressed nor engages the reader. Furthermore, this knowledge telling approach to writing prevents the writer from adding more to his or her composition at a later time. The writers create a concrete rough draft; they can not add more ideas to it unless the ideas fit into what they have already written.

I am continuing to compare the number of functional and nonfunctional elements in their paragraphs, because as Jimmy and Peter proceeded through the intervention they should have started to create compositions that contained more functional than nonfunctional elements. That is, their ability to organize their ideas, and writing, should have improved creating more coherent paragraphs.

Jimmy's pre-intervention paragraph contained three ideas and one functional element. He did not plan for this paragraph, and he did not proofread before he handed it in. As he was composing his paragraph he often paused to stare at his shoe or out the window. When I asked him what was wrong, he answered that he was having trouble closing his paragraph. Jimmy completed his pre-intervention paragraph using the same techniques as most students with learning disabilities. He did not plan, included a small number of ideas, and engaged in knowledge telling. The method of writing employed by Jimmy led to a paragraph that contained four nonfunctional paragraph elements and did not fully respond to the topic being discussed.

However, by his final paragraph Jimmy was planning, generating a larger number of ideas, and writing coherent paragraphs. Jimmy's final paragraph contained ten ideas, seven more than in his first paragraph, contained six functional elements, and zero nonfunctional elements. Before he began writing Jimmy spent six minutes planning for his paragraph. As a result of the intervention, Jimmy improved in many aspects of writing that students with learning disabilities generally struggle to use.

As Jimmy's writing improved, so did Peter's. Peter's pre-intervention paragraph contained six ideas, two functional and two nonfunctional paragraph elements. In terms of planning for compositions, Peter was already one step ahead of the game; he chose to

create a web before writing this paragraph. Peter spent six minutes creating his web, and it contained his reasons for the paragraph. After receiving instruction in Self-Regulated Strategy Development, Peter was planning for ten minutes and creating paragraphs that contained zero nonfunctional paragraph elements. His final composition not only contained eight functional paragraph elements but also sixteen ideas. Each of these sixteen ideas was directly related to the topic being discussed. His final paragraph was well-organized and well-supported.

Overall, Jimmy and Peter's writing improved in all of the aspects of writing that are considered weak for students with learning disabilities. Jimmy and Peter's success with Self-Regulated Strategy Development is not unique. Other researchers have completed studies on SRSD that had similar results for students with learning disabilities. By discussing what the students know about persuasive writing, informing them of the elements of the persuasive genre of writing, and providing them with a mnemonic to remember those parts educators can give students the background necessary to produce a composition that contains all of the requisite parts of a persuasive composition.

Furthermore, working closely with the students to compose written pieces gives the students a chance to see the process in detail. After they have observed the process of composing several times, the students are given the chance to compose on their own. However, the students are not sent to sit on their own to compose. Rather, the instructor walks them through the writing process. This allows them to become familiar with the process before tackling it on their own. Once the instructor believes that the students comprehend the writing strategies of SRSD the students begin to compose on their own. This detailed, explicit instruction allows the students to become familiar with the

strategies of SRSD; it also allows the instructor to determine if they need more instruction in any one particular stage of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development process. In conclusion, SRSD seems to be a process that provides students with learning disabilities with strategies that facilitate their growth into better writers.

In the Future

One of the questions that would make for an interesting study, not only concerning the use of SRSD strategies, but also addressing cognitive writing processes in general, is whether or not the gender of the participants affects the outcome or written product. Does the gender of the participants affect his or her ability to employ cognitive writing strategies? The male participants in my study either improved the number of persuasive elements in their paragraphs, or showed no improvement between their pre-intervention and final paragraphs. However, the female participant in this study lost an element of persuasive paragraphs between the beginning and end of the intervention. Were these results a fluke, or is this a common occurrence? Further investigation into the success of male and female students involved in SRSD may reveal a difference in the way that a student monitors his or her work while writing. If it is found that male and female students learn writing strategies differently, then more effective modes of writing instruction can be developed to target male and female students.

Another factor of the effectiveness of SRSD instruction that could be investigated is the amount of group interaction exhibited by the students and the outcome of the study. If participants are more actively involved during the first four stages of SRSD are they more likely to create compositions that contain the appropriate writing genre elements? Several of this study's participants were actively involved during our group sessions.

Peter and Jimmy were my most enthusiastic participants. They often shared their ideas and opinions during our group meetings. And, at the end of the study, both Jimmy and Peter had made improvements in their writing. They were both composing paragraphs that not only contained three more genre elements than their pre-intervention paragraphs, but also included all of the parts of a persuasive composition. A study that specifically determined whether participation affects the outcome of the students' writing would provide educators with methods for actively involving students during writing instruction that would facilitate the learning of the students in his or her classroom.

In this study, Joey used the P and O in POW as he was instructed to; he used P to pick the topic he knew the most about, and O to help him organize his notes. However, he also developed his own "twist" of the strategy. After Joey had picked his topic, and filled in his graphic organizer, he once again applied the P and O. Rather than just taking his reasons and forming them into sentences for his paragraph, Joey returned to the P once again. He looked at the reasons that he had brainstormed on his graphic organizer, and then picked the ones that he knew the most about. After he had selected his strongest reasons he used them to form his paragraph. At the end of the study, Joey had improved his persuasive writing by creating paragraphs that contained all of the requisite persuasive elements: a topic sentence, three reasons, and an ending. A study on the use of the SRSD strategies by students, specifically the use of strategies that have been twisted by the students to suit his or her needs, would benefit the instructors by providing them with alternatives to the basic strategies. By determining the different ways that students have used the strategies, and the success achieved by these students, researchers could introduce these "twisted" strategies to other students that they believe might

benefit from their use.

Another feature of SRSD that I feel would be worth investigating is whether or not there is a difference in the level of difficulty associated with the strategies of Self-Regulated Strategy Development. For instance, are self-talk statements harder to learn and use than POW? My study's participants frequently referred to POW, without being prompted, during conferences on their writing and during their exit interviews. However, they did not mention self-talk unless they were responding to questions regarding the strategy. Furthermore, three of my participants admitted that they had not used any self-talk statements for at least one of the paragraphs they created during the intervention. Vanessa, one of the three, admitted during her exit interview that she had not used the self-talk strategy at all during the study. By studying the students' perceptions of the SRSD strategies, future researchers can develop methods of implementation that make the strategies easy to comprehend and use for all students.

During Peter's case study, I mentioned that I believed he might have been using his own version of self-talk before he even received instruction in the strategy. This instruction may have hampered Peter's success, because he was trying to replace a self-taught strategy with one that he was uncomfortable using. He did not need to be taught a "new" strategy; he just needed guidance in using his own. Research into the methods used by students to work through compositions before receiving SRSD instruction would be beneficial to students involved in SRSD instruction. By investigating Peter's writing process, before beginning the intervention, I would have been able to provide him with the correct instruction giving him a firm footing towards success.

Rather than providing all students with a panacea approach to writing instruction,

researchers and teachers need to develop an understanding of each student's strengths and weaknesses in order to facilitate his or her growth as a writer. The practice of determining the cognitive strategies used by students must transcend the borders of math and reading instruction in order to create academically well rounded students. This practice is one that should be established during the education of teachers at his or her respective institution of higher learning.

As an undergraduate and graduate student, I was required to take classes that dealt with the instruction of both reading and mathematics. I was also required to take classes that provided me with strategies for teaching science and social studies; however, I was not required to take a class focusing on teaching writing strategies and composition skills. In one of my reading courses I did learn about process writing; however, I was not provided with explicit instruction in how to guide students through those stages.

As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, schools across the country will eventually be required to have one hundred percent of their students perform at proficient levels on the reading and mathematical skills assessed through standardized testing. If a school does not meet the stipulations mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act, they face possible funding cuts and a loss of autonomy in curriculum decisions. To further exacerbate the situation, low scores achieved by the students in these districts are publicly posted in "school report cards". Yet, despite this push for success in reading and mathematics, other subjects, particularly writing, are not receiving the attention necessary to ensure student success. Writing is not a skill that can be pushed aside or put on the back burner. Today's students will continue to use writing skills developed in elementary school for the rest of their lives. Whether they are in college, or they are

writing for personal reasons, American students must be able to compose strong compositions that satisfy the needs of the specific writing genres and speak to multiple audiences.

Based on the success of four of the students in my study, it can be suggested that instruction in the use of the strategies embedded in Self-Regulated Strategy Development can help students create compositions that satisfy these needs. Through explicit instruction in the elements of specific writing genres, and in the cognitive processes used to create strong compositions, students are provided with strategies that teach them to compose by using the three stages of the writing process: planning, writing, and revising. Through the use of Self-Regulated Strategy Development, teachers can provide students with cognitive strategies to guide them through the writing of compositions. The strategies learned during SRSD instruction can be used throughout the student's life to help them create strong compositions. By instituting the strategies of Self-Regulated Strategy Development into writing curriculums, teachers can provide their students with writing skills that will help them become a generation of competent writers.

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