

Teaching Expressive Writing to Students with Learning Disabilities

Improving expressive writing of students with learning disabilities

Teach writing regularly and frequently

Instruction needs to be explicit

3 critical steps of writing: planning, writing, and revision

Fundamental skills and challenging tasks need to be going on

Use think sheets, planning sheets, and prompt cards to create a common language

A common language can be especially helpful for developing writers

1

Englert and colleagues (1991) conducted research on procedures to explicitly teach writing steps

- Instruction phrases include: text analysis, modeling the writing process (with inner dialogue that more experienced writers engage in), guided student practice in composition, and independent writing
- The think sheets has an acronym of POWER: Plan, Organize, Write, Edit, and Revise
- Teacher identified students' problems from the worksheet and provided scaffolding.
- The worksheet is a note-taking tool to help students use strategies and engage in classroom dialogue.

2

Developing writing style through revision

- Students revise infrequently and usually concentrate on mechanical and word level changes. They rarely focus on improving the content or meaning. This is especially the case for students with learning disabilities.
- Teachers can add concrete procedural facilitators to direct students to make substantial revisions. This can help students, especially students with learning disabilities, to reflect on their writing more deeply and learn to improve their text quality.

3

Role of feedback and interactive dialogue

- Feedback and interactive dialogue can facilitate the application of procedural facilitators.
- Dialogue about student-written texts can be a good way to illustrate the connection between reading and writing.
- Feedback and dialogue help students' ability to think independently and flexibly.
- Interactive dialogue includes multiple cycles of reflection, realization, and redress of problems. It helps students to be more aware of their own thinking (Wong et al., 1997).
- It may not matter much who (peer/ teacher) is providing feedback. What matters is whether there is a system to make feedback elaborate and explicit (Wong et al., 1996).

4

Explicit teaching of genre conventions

- Text structure varies for different genres. Explicit instruction is needed, combining the use of feedback, interactive dialogue, and worksheets.
- Caution that there is not a "correct" way to construct any genre of text.
- Instruction should encourage students to use various text structure conventions.

5

Impact of handwriting and spelling

- Students whose handwriting skill is not proficient needs a lot of cognitive resources to be spent on it. As a result, less resources can be invested in other aspects of writing.
- Lack of handwriting proficiency can limit learners' composition process and their writing development.
- Explicit instruction on handwriting and spelling to young, developing writers can effectively improve their writing performance. Explicit and organized instruction is especially crucial for students with learning disabilities.

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