

Strategy Instruction to Support Students with Writing Difficulties in the Inclusive Classroom

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Statement of the Problem

- Students with writing difficulties often struggle in school (Saddler et al., 2018).
- Commonly exhibit difficulties with writing (Gillespie & Graham, 2014).
- Perform below their typically achieving peers on national achievement tests (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011).
- Lack the adequate academic skills to write on grade level (Taft & Mason, 2011).
- Difficulty with the writing process (Graham et al., 2001), especially with different types of writing: expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative.
- Finally, students often lack strategies for writing success (Troia, 2006).

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2011)

- The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is “a continuing and nationally representative measure of trends in academic achievement of U.S. elementary and secondary students in various subjects. It is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what our nation's students know and can do in select subjects. It was first administered in 1969 to measure student achievement nationally. Teachers, principals, parents, policymakers, and researchers all use NAEP results to assess progress and develop ways to improve education in the United States.” (https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/focus_on_naep/)

Writing (*At or Above Proficient Level*)

- Grade 8 **27%**; 12 **27%** (Typically Achieving)
- Grade 8 **5%**; 12 **5%** (Disabilities)

Written Expression

- Dysgraphia is “a learning disability that affects writing abilities. It can manifest itself as difficulties with spelling, poor handwriting and trouble putting thoughts on paper. Because writing requires a complex set of motor and information processing skills, saying a student has dysgraphia is not sufficient. A student with disorders in written expression will benefit from specific accommodations in the learning environment, as well as additional practice learning the skills required to be an accomplished writer.”

[Supporting Students With Dysgraphia - YouTube](#)

Signs of Dysgraphia?

- Tight, awkward pencil grip and body position
- Illegible handwriting
- Avoiding writing or drawing tasks
- Tiring quickly while writing
- Saying words out loud while writing
- Unfinished or omitted words in sentences
- Difficulty organizing thoughts on paper
- Difficulty with syntax structure and grammar
- Large gap between written ideas and understanding demonstrated through speech.

So, what can we do as teachers?

Early Writers

- Use paper with raised lines for a sensory guide to staying within the lines.
- Try different pens and pencils to find one that's most comfortable.
- Practice writing letters and numbers in the air with big arm movements to improve motor memory of these important shapes.
- Encourage proper grip, posture and paper positioning for writing.



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- Use multi-sensory techniques for learning letters, shapes and numbers.

Introduce a word processor on a computer early; however do not eliminate handwriting for the child.

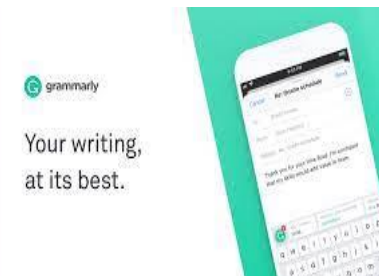
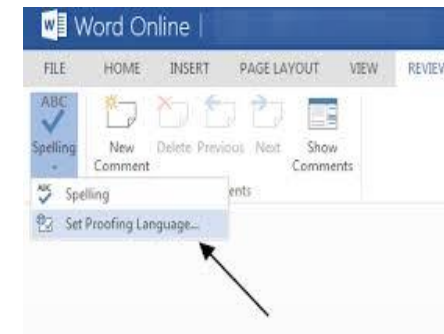
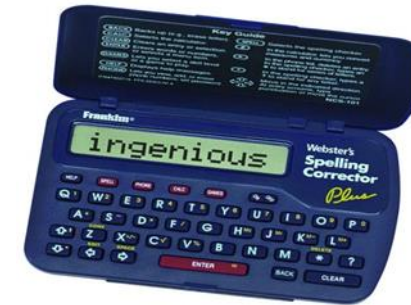
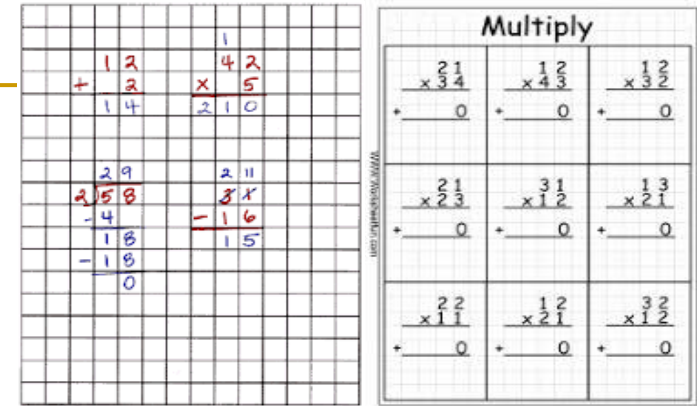
While typing can make it easier to write by alleviating the frustration of forming letters, handwriting is a vital part of a person's ability to function in the world.

Be patient and positive, encourage practice and praise effort - becoming a good writer takes time and practice.



Young Students

- Use large graph paper for math calculation to keep columns and rows organized.
- Electronic dictionaries
- Encourage use of a spell checker - speaking spell checkers are available for handwritten work.
- Try grammar correcting programs or software

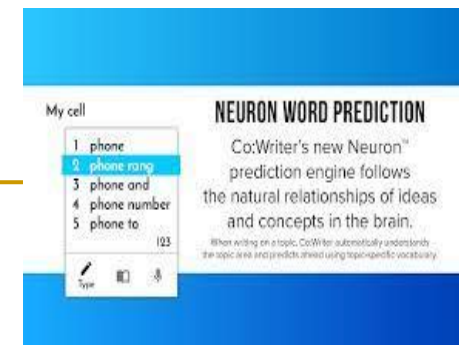


Teenagers & Adults

- Provide tape recorders to supplement note taking and to prepare for writing assignments.
- Create a step-by-step plan that breaks writing assignments into small tasks.
- When organizing writing projects, create a list of keywords that will be useful.
- Use assistive technology such as voice-activated software if the mechanical aspects of writing remain a major hurdle.



(<https://www.ldonline.org/ld-topics/writing-spelling/what-dysgraphia>)



Writing Assignments

- Writing is a complex process that requires students to attend to multiple elements while also monitoring their performance.
- Students need to learn not only to pay attention to the rules and mechanics of writing but also to develop effective and efficient composition skills.
- Negotiating and coordinating basic skills, knowledge, form, purpose, attention to an intended audience, and the rules of written language can prove difficult even for skilled writers.
- Core Elements: Planning, Organizing, Writing, & Editing and Revising!

(The IRIS Center. (2006). Improving writing performance: A strategy for writing persuasive essays. Retrieved from <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/pow/>)

Plan

- *Planning* refers to the use of a deliberate and organized approach to tackling a writing task and includes a writer's first thoughts or basic ideas about the topic.
 - Students who struggle with writing generally do not plan ahead; rather, they compose their text as they write.
 - During the planning process, students should ask themselves who their readers will be and what the essay's purpose is.
 - Planning ahead helps students to form more complete thoughts and to produce more cohesive essays.
-

Organize

- It is not at all unusual for students to have difficulty selecting the important information from everything they brainstormed during the planning stage.
 - Students often also have difficulty knowing just how to use that information in their essays.
 - Therefore, once students have formulated their writing plans, it is time to organize their thoughts.
 - During this step of the writing process, students will:
 - (a) Elaborate on the ideas that were generated for them during the planning process
 - (b) Determine what information, if any, is still needed in order to fill in the gaps
 - (c) Gather that information
 - (d) Arrange their ideas so that they flow together and make sense
-

Write

- In the initial writing stage, students will produce a rough draft incorporating the ideas that were generated during the planning stage and subsequently arranged in the organization stage.
 - This initial writing phase requires students to coordinate ongoing cognitive demands, such as:
 - Combining planned ideas with new thoughts
 - Remembering the purpose of the paper
 - Using appropriate grammar rules
 - Considering the intended audience
-

Edit and Revise

- Though the editing and revising stages are usually thought of as one step, they are, in fact, two interlinked steps.
 - It is important for students to distinguish between the editing and revising steps in the writing process.
 - For example, students need to learn that writing is a process that requires them to apply editing marks as they revise their essays.
 - The revising stage, however, may also require changes in content or organization.
-

Editing

During the editing stages of the writing process, students will:

- Check their grammar
- Check their spelling
- Check their punctuation
- Ask whether their ideas are clear
- Ask whether their purpose has been met

Other than teacher-editing, there are two ways editing can occur: self-editing and peer-editing.

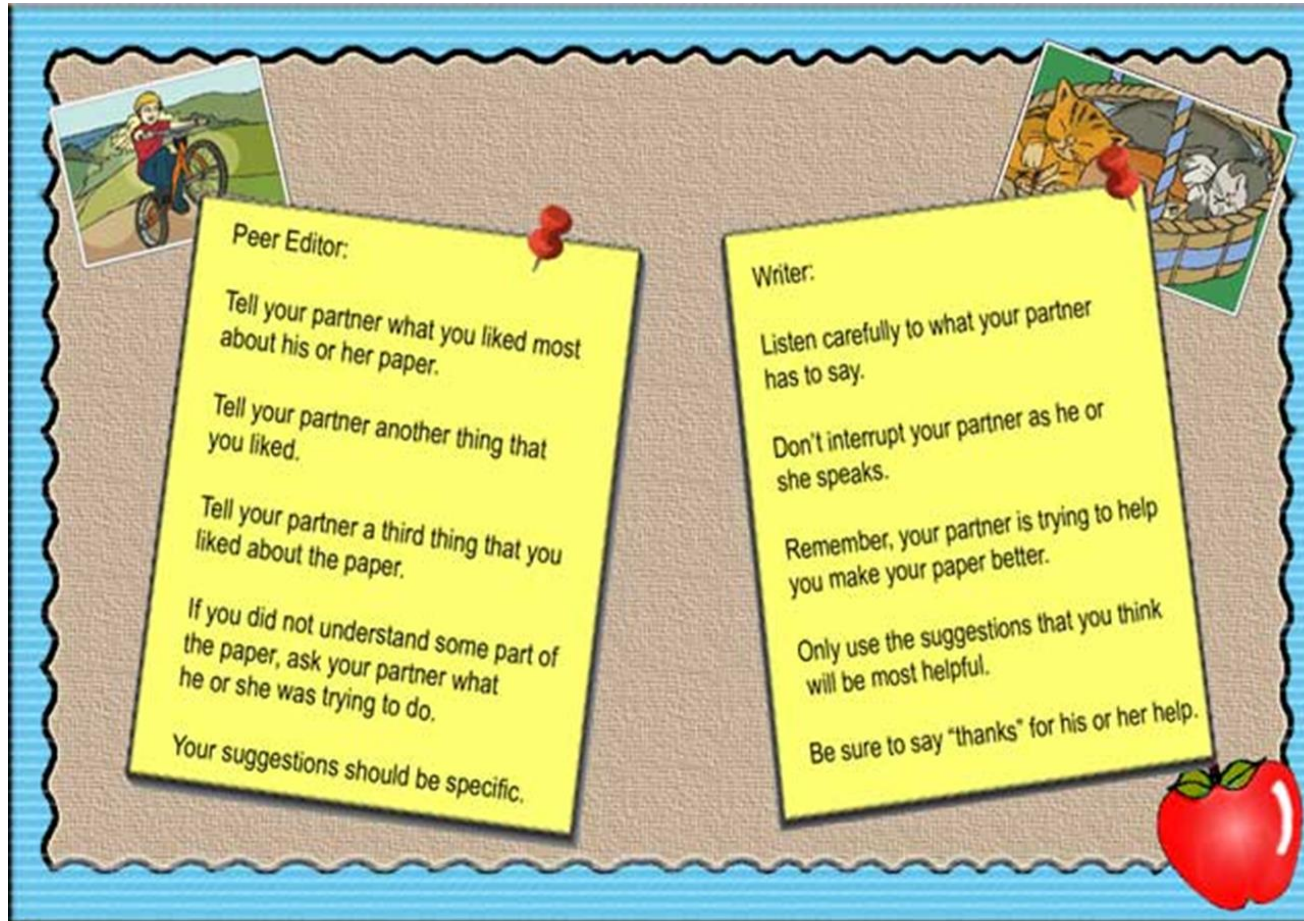
Self-Editing

- When a student edits his or her own paper, he or she should read it aloud and listen to its flow and choice of words.
 - He or she should also listen to hear whether any words have been left out.
 - Keep in mind that it may be difficult for some students to identify flaws during the self-editing process.
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Peer-Editing

- By contrast, when a peer edits a paper, he or she may be able to more easily point out areas that are difficult to understand.
 - Collaboration with a peer allows a student to gain additional insight through examining his or her own peer-edited paper, editing the peer's paper, and sharing ideas and opinions.
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Peer-Editing – Roles & Responsibilities



Revising





- Revising allows the writer to consider the content, quality, and clarity of his or her composition.
- When students revise their work, they should look at the editing suggestions made by their teachers and peers, and that they themselves arrived at during self-editing, to determine how the edits and comments can help to improve their papers.

For example, they might:

- Utilize comments and suggestions
 - Rearrange the order of the text
 - Make corrections
 - Expand ideas
 - Rewrite their papers
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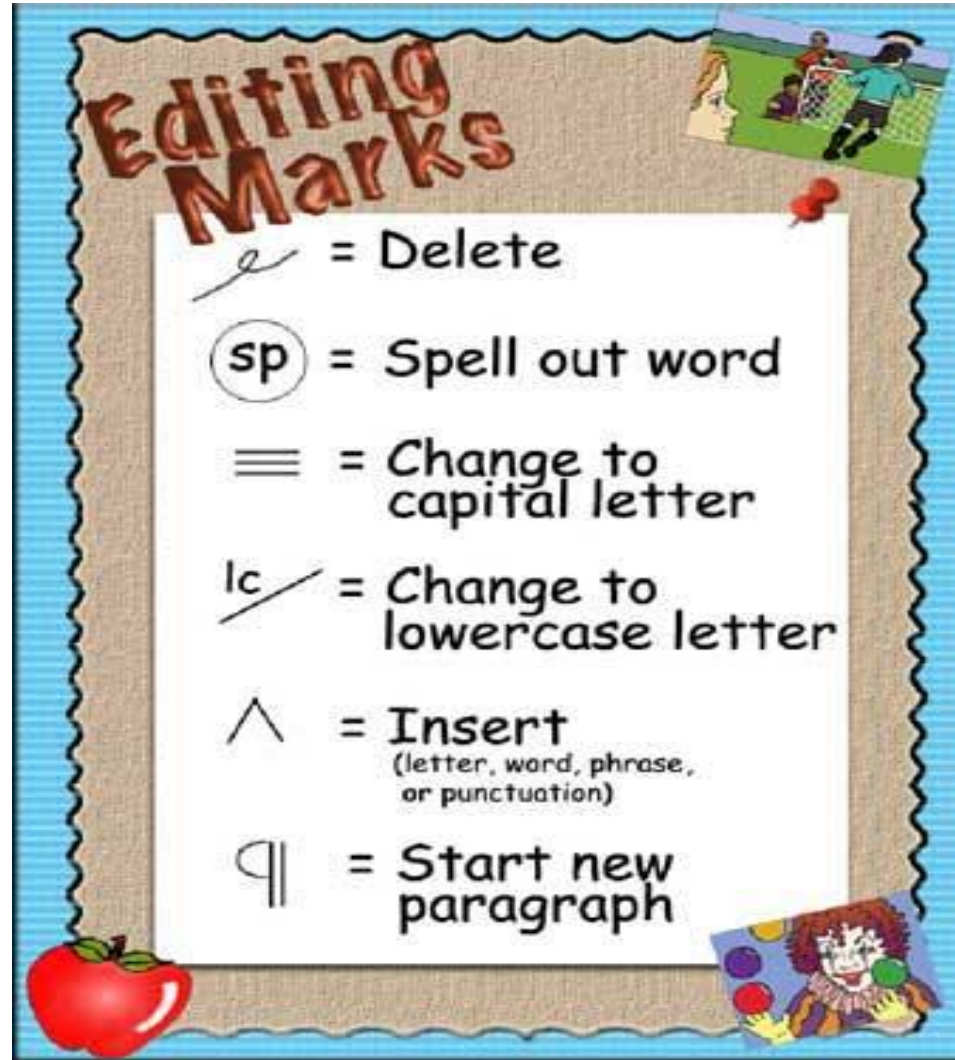
POW+TREE Writing Strategy

- A research-validated strategy, POW is a mnemonic device designed to help students **structure** any kind of writing.
 - TREE is also a mnemonic device students can use to **organize** their ideas.
 - As is demonstrated in the next slide, students can combine the POW and TREE strategies to address the first three elements of the writing process in order to create persuasive essays.
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Strategy		Activity
 Pick an idea or opinion.		Formulate an opinion and state that opinion clearly.
 Organize and generate notes and ideas for each part of the TREE.		Organize notes by completing a graphic organizer:
	Topic Sentence	Formulate a topic sentence expressing an opinion.
	Reason	Give at least three reasons to support the topic sentence.
	Explanation	Explain your reasons.
	Ending	Formulate a statement to summarize the topic sentence.
 Write and say more.		Write a complete paragraph. Follow the plan developed using the TREE strategy.

- After completing the POW+TREE strategy, students will still need to address the fourth element of the writing process: editing and revising.

These skills should be taught as part of any comprehensive writing program.





ick an idea or opinion.



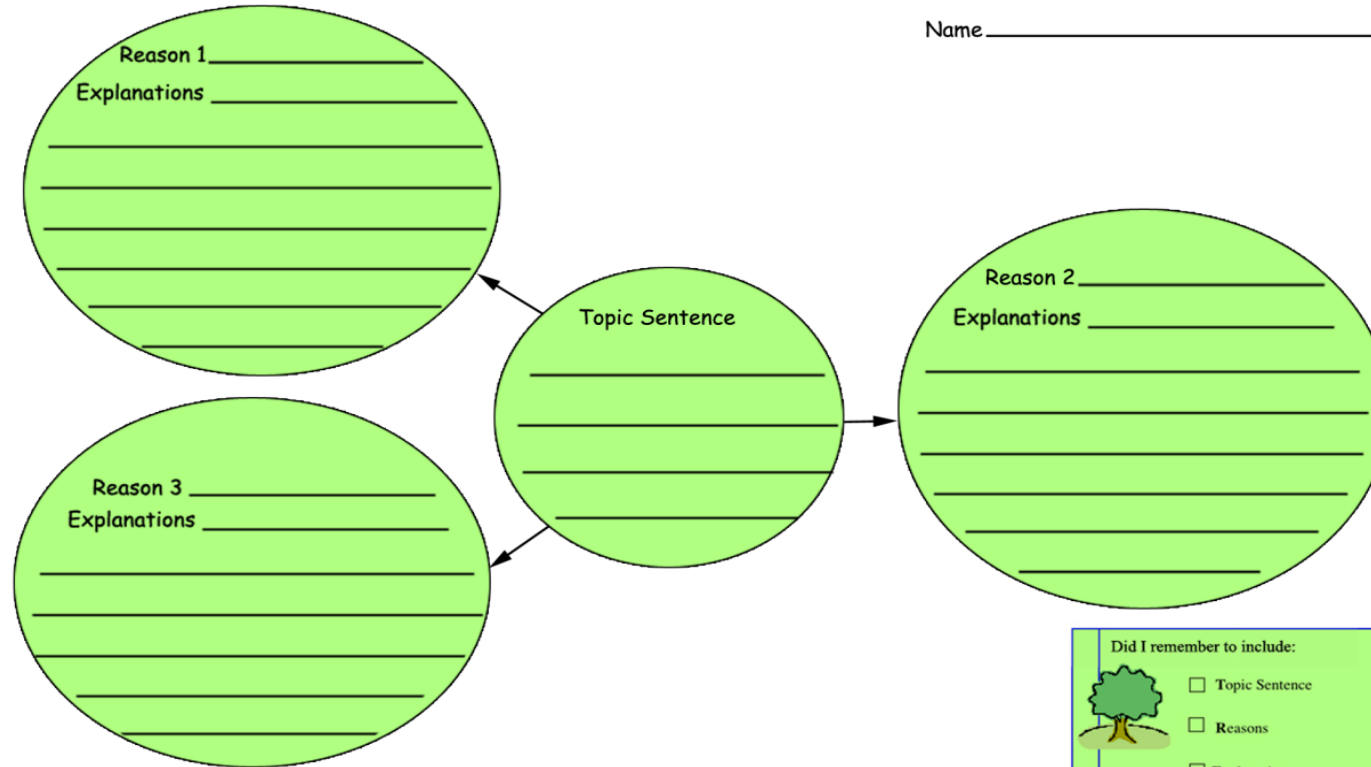
ick an idea or option.

i think kids shoeld
be abl to have cmprts in
there room




Organize and generate notes and ideas
for each part of the TREE.

Name _____



Ending: _____

Did I remember to include:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic Sentence
	<input type="checkbox"/> Reasons
	<input type="checkbox"/> Explanations
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ending



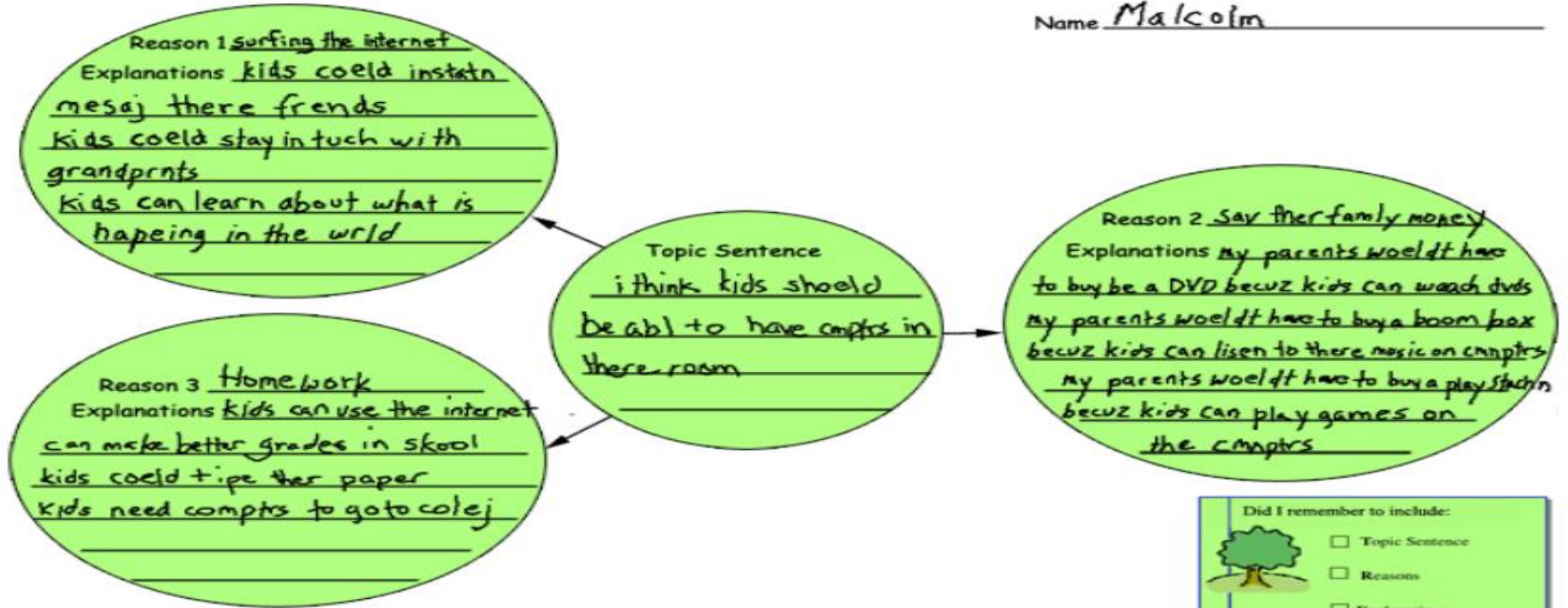
Topic Sentence

Reason

Explanation

Ending

Name Malcolm



Ending: i think kids shoeld have cmprts in there room for many reasons, but most of all
becuz it will help them surf the internet, save there family money and do there homework.

Did I remember to include:



☐ Topic Sentence

☐ Reasons

☐ Explanations

☐ Ending



rite and say more.

malcolm

- I think kids should be able to have computers in their own room.

it is important to be able to surf the internet. if kids had computers in their bedroom then they could talk to their friends and have some privacy. if kids had a computer then they could IM their friends. They could stay in touch with their grandparents and send them emails. They could learn about what is happening around the world.
- kids could also save their parents a lot of money. they would not have to buy a DVD player because kids could use their computer to watch a movie. they would not have to buy a boom box because kids could listen to music on their computers or ipods. they would not have to buy a play station because kids could play games on their computers.
one more thing is that kids have to use the internet for homework all the time. it would help kids make better grades. kids have to type their homework and then turn it in. if kids don't have a computer, kids wouldn't enjoy doing their homework as much. and besides, kids will need it when they go to college.
- i think kids should have computers in their room for many reasons, but most of all because it will let them surf the internet and save their parents a lot of money and help them do their homework.

Teacher Feedback

Malcolm

I think kids shoeld be able to have Comptrs in there own room.

it is important to be able to use
kids had Comptrs
talk to
kids had
friends.
Grandpnt
learn abo

kids could
they would
kids could us
would not ha
listen to mus
not have to
play games or
one more thir
for homework
better grades.
And then turn
kids woelnt en
And besides, kid

i think kids shoul
for many reasor
let them surf th
a lot of money and help them do there homework.

Malcolm,
Your essay is coming along very nicely.
For example:

- You began your essay with your topic sentence.
- You included at least three reasons in your writing.
- You are remembering to use your punctuation at the end of your sentences.

Here's what you still need to do:

- Add in an example of a homework assignment for which a student might need to use a computer.
- Think of a different way to organize the sentences about how a family might save money by allowing a kid to have a computer in his or her bedroom.
- Correct the misspelled words.

Good work,
Ms. Lin

if
and
if
e
d
t

Student – Revise & Resubmit

maxohn

I think kids should be able to have computers in their own room.

It is important to be able to communicate with friends. If kids were allowed to have a computer in their room, then they could instant message their friends and have privacy at the same time. They could stay in touch with their grandparents and send them e-mails too. Kids could learn about what is happening around the world.

If kids were allowed to have a computer in their bedroom then they could save their parents a whole lot of money. For example, kids love listening to music and watching movies. If kids had a computer in their room then their parents could save money by not having to buy them a boom box or a DVD player.

One more reason is that kids have to use the Internet to complete their homework. It could even help kids improve their grades because kids have to type their homework and then turn it in. If kids don't have a computer, kids wouldn't enjoy doing their homework as much. Finally, kids will need to have a computer when they go to college.

I think kids should have computers in their room for many reasons, but most of all because it will let them surf the Internet, save their parents lots of money, and help kids complete their homework.

Mnemonic “First-Letter” Strategies for Writing (Earlier Research)

PLEASE (Welch, 1992)



P

Pick

Choose a topic that interests you.



L

List

Write down all the information about the topic.



E

Evaluate

Check that the list is complete and organize your ideas into an outline.



A

Activate

Start each paragraph with a topic sentence.



S

Support

Expand and explain your ideas.



E

End

Create a concluding sentence and check your work.

PLAN and WRITE (De La Paz, 1999)



P

Pay attention to the prompt

Read instructions carefully. Make sure you understand the task.



L

List the main ideas

Brainstorm. Use a graphic organizer to list ideas related to the topic.



A

Add supporting information

Include details, examples, and explanations to each of the main ideas.



N

Number your ideas

Order the ideas from most to least important.



Work from the PLAN

Use the list of ideas to develop a thesis. Reread the instructions to ensure you answer the question appropriately.



Remember the goals

Make sure all ideas relate to the topic and all facts support the argument.



Include transition words

Link each paragraph to the next using logical transitions.



Try to use different sentence types

Use simple, compound, declarative, exclamatory, and question sentences.



Exciting words

Check for varied vocabulary and use a thesaurus.

TOWER WITH COPS (Mercer & Mercer, 2001)



T

Think

Brainstorm some ideas and determine the focus of the paper.



O

Organize

Create an outline, making sure to include all the examples you need to make your point.



W

Write

Start to put your words on paper!



E

Edit

Review your writing, or have a peer review it, and make corrections.



R

Rewrite

Add your changes and create a final draft.

Are you finished writing? Call the COPS!

<u>C</u> apitalization	<u>O</u> verall Appearance	<u>P</u> unctuation	<u>S</u> pelling
<p>Have I capitalized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The first letter of the first word of each sentence?- Proper nouns, such as the names of people and places?- Titles?- Months and days of the week?- Holidays?- Organizations?- Nationalities?- Historical Events?	<p>Is my text well-organized?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Is my handwriting spaced correctly and is it legible?- Is my paper neat, without rips or smudges?- Have I used paragraphs?- Have I used complete sentences?- Does my text make sense?- If I'm unsure of something, have I asked for help?	<p>Is the punctuation correct?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Did I put a period, question mark or exclamation mark at the end of each sentence?- Have I used commas correctly?- Have I used quotation marks?- Have I used apostrophes to show either possession or omission of letters or numbers, such as "can't"?	<p>Did I spell everything correctly?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- If I don't know the correct spelling, did I use spellcheck, a dictionary or ask for help? <p>Did I use the correct spelling of homonyms, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to/too/two- they're/their/there- its/it's- been/bean- close/clothes- deer/dear

POW + WWW, What = 2, How = 2 (Harris et al., 2008)

The graphic features the letters 'POW' in large, bold, yellow font with a purple starburst background. Below 'POW' is the text '+WWW, What=2, How=2' in a smaller, multi-colored font. To the left of the main text, the letters 'P', 'O', and 'W' are arranged vertically, each with a purple starburst background. To the right of each letter is a corresponding instruction: 'Pick an idea for your story.' for 'P', 'Organize your story using WWW, What=2, How=2.' for 'O', and 'Write your story. Use exciting words and remember to check to see whether the story makes sense.' for 'W'.

P Pick an idea for your story.

O Organize your story using **WWW**, **What=2**, **How=2**.

W Write your story. Use exciting words and remember to check to see whether the story makes sense.

- Who** is the main character?
- When** does the story take place?
- Where** does the story take place?
- What** does the main character do or want to do? What do the other characters do?
- What** happens then? What happens to the other characters?
- How** does the story end?
- How** does the main character feel? How do the other characters feel?

Graphic Organizer: Reminder for Story Parts



WWW

- Who** – Who are the characters?
Nicole, Kendra, the Director
- When** – When did the story take place?
During the winter
- Where** – Where did the story take place?
Stage and home

What=2

- What** – What did the main character do?
Switched her spot before the show
- What** – What happened after he or she did it?
the director found out.

How=2

- How** – How did the story end?
The director said even if your bad you can still do your part.
- How** – How did the main character feel?
Sad



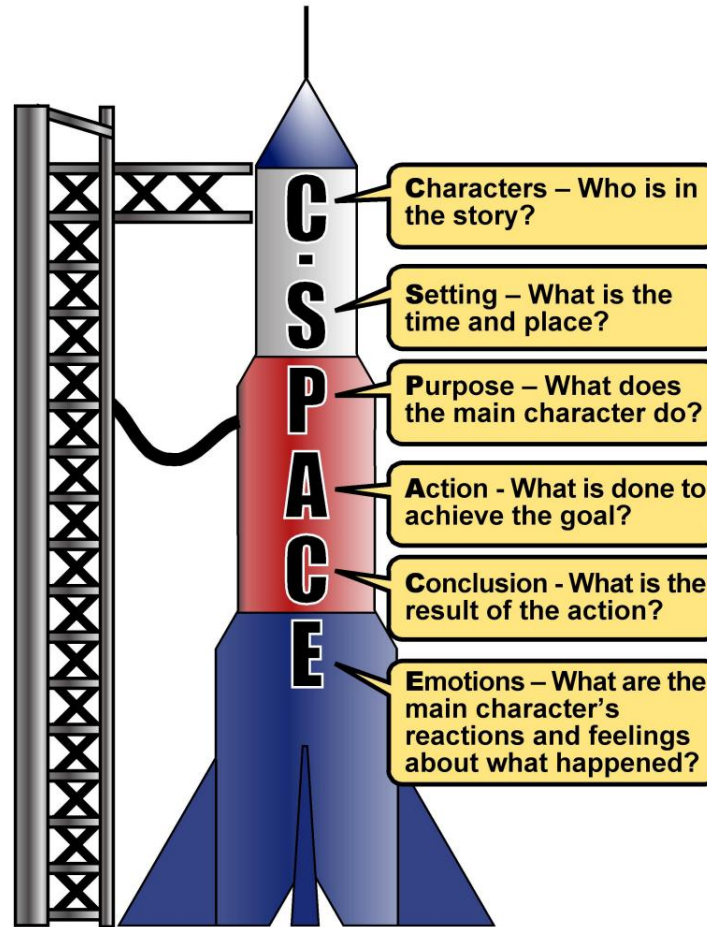
(Adapted from Powerful Writing Strategies For All Students, by K. R. Harris, G., Graham, L. Mason, and B. Friedlander, 2008, pp. 118, 120.)

SCAN (Harris et al., 2008)

Six Steps for Revising (including SCAN)

1. Read the essay
 2. Identify the sentence that tells the opinion or belief. Is it clearly written?
 3. Give two reasons why you believe it?
 4. Use SCAN on each sentence:
 - S** = Does it make **S**ense
 - C** = Is it **C**onnecting to my belief?
 - A** = Can you **A**dd more?
 - N** = **N**ote errors?
 5. Make changes as necessary
 6. Reread the essay and make more changes.
-

POW + C-SPACE (Harris et al., 2008)



Questions?
