

## *Self-Regulation as a Key to Writing*

**Summary:** Beyond simply knowing how to write, how much do students need to be able to monitor their goals and use of effective writing process? In an article for the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, a pair of German researchers confirm previous findings that self-regulation has a major impact on students' writing skill and discuss why that might be.

### **Practical Applications**

In a randomized control trial, one set of fourth-grade students were instructed in both writing strategies *and* self-regulation strategies, while the other group were only instructed in writing strategies. The self-regulation strategies taught to the test group were:

- **Strategy Implementation Procedures.** In these, “students were instructed to monitor their accuracy in implementing the target [writing] strategies by using metacognitive aids (graphic organizers and checklists)...” In addition, students were taught to use pre-writing planning guides and given checklists to guide revision and editing.
- **Outcome Evaluation Procedures.** “These procedures relied on two techniques, goal setting and monitoring of learning progress.” Students were led by the teacher in evaluating their writing against a list of desired elements. Then, students were prompted to set goals for elements or styles that they wanted to try to incorporate in their next piece of writing. Throughout creation of their next piece of writing, students were regularly prompted to reflect on their progress towards their self-selected goals.
- To aid with their self-regulation, students were given a chart showing the rubric scores of every story they had written recently, broken out into sections (e.g. content, style). Students set specific rubric point goals for themselves and the teacher regularly praised student work using their rubric growth.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the researchers found significantly more growth in writing skill and knowledge among the students who received instruction both in writing strategies and self-regulation strategies – in some categories, as much as doubling the raw scores of students in the strategies-only group.

### **Conclusion and Citation**

The authors conclude that “an intervention that combines the instruction of writing strategies with self-regulation skills exerts a strong, coherent and sustainable influence” on students' writing achievement. It appears that helping students think about and monitor what they are trying to accomplish with their writing is essential to boosting their success at writing.

Brunstein, J. & Glaser, C. “Testing a Path-Analytic Mediation Model of How Self-Regulated Writing Strategies Improve Fourth Graders' Composition Skills: A Randomized Control Trial.” *Journal of Education Psychology*, 103.4 (2011), pp. 922-938. <http://bit.ly/vrHJ2K> (subscription only).