



RTI Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Schools

Best Practices in Writing Interventions

Jim Wright, Presenter

28 January 2010 / 4 March 2010
RTI Institute @ PNW BOCES
Yorktown Heights, NY

Jim Wright
364 Long Road
Tully, NY 13159
Email: jim@jimwrightonline.com
Website: http://www.interventioncentral.org/RTI_academic.php

School-Wide Strategies for Managing... WRITING

A service of www.interventioncentral.org

The act of writing contains its own inner tensions. Writers must abide by a host of rules that govern the mechanics and conventions of writing yet are also expected—within the constraints of those rules-- to formulate original, even creative, thoughts. It is no wonder that many students find writing to be a baffling exercise and have little sense of how to break larger writing assignments into predictable, achievable subtasks. But of course writing can be taught and writing can be mastered. The best writing instruction places the process of written expression on a timeline: Good writers first plan their writing. Then they write. Once a draft has been created, good writers review and revise their work. While the stages of the writing process are generally sequential, good writers also find themselves jumping frequently between these stages (for example, collecting additional notes and writing new sections of a paper as part of the revision process). Depending upon their stage of development as writers, struggling student writers may benefit from the following strategies:

Content: Memorize a Story Grammar Checklist (*Reid & Lienemann, 2006*). Students write lengthier stories that include greater detail when they use a memorized strategy to judge their writing-in-progress. These young writers are taught a simple mnemonic device with 7 elements: 'WWW, What=2, How = 2'. This mnemonic translates into a story grammar checklist: WHO the main character is; WHERE the story takes place; WHEN the story occurs; WHAT the main character(s) do or plan to do; WHAT happens next; HOW the story concludes; and HOW the character(s) feel about their experiences. Students are taught this strategy through teacher demonstration, discussion, teacher modeling; and student use of the strategy with gradually fading teacher support. When students use the 'WWW, What=2, How = 2' tactic independently, they may still need occasional prompting to use it in their writing. NOTE: Teachers can apply this intervention idea to any genre of writing (e.g., persuasive essay), distilling its essential elements into a similar short, easily memorized checklist to teach to students.

Fluency: Have Students Write Every Day (*Graham, Harris & Larsen, 2001*). Short daily writing assignments can build student writing fluency and make writing a more motivating activity. For struggling writers, formal writing can feel much like a foreign language, with its own set of obscure grammatical rules and intimidating vocabulary. Just as people learn another language more quickly and gain confidence when they use it frequently, however, poor writers gradually develop into better writers when they are prompted to write daily--and receive rapid feedback and encouragement about that writing. The teacher can encourage daily writing by giving short writing assignments, allowing time for students to journal about their learning activities, requiring that they correspond daily with pen pals via email, or even posting a question on the board as a bell-ringer activity that students can respond to in writing for extra credit. Short daily writing tasks have the potential to lower students' aversion to writing and boost their confidence in using the written word.

Fluency: Self-Monitor and Graph Results to Increase Writing Fluency (*Rathvon, 1999*). Students gain motivation to write through daily monitoring and charting of their own and classwide rates of writing fluency. At least several times per week, assign your students timed periods of 'freewriting' when they write in their personal journals. Freewriting periods all the same amount of time each day. After each freewriting period, direct each student to count up the number of words he or she has written in the daily journal entry (whether spelled correctly or not). Next, tell students to record their personal writing-fluency score in their journal and also chart the score on their own time-series graph for visual feedback. Then collect the day's writing-fluency scores of all students in the class, sum those scores, and chart the results on a large time-series graph posted at the front of the room. At the start of each week, calculate that week's goal of increasing total class

words written by taking last week's score and increasing by five percent. At the end of each week, review the class score and praise students if they have shown good effort.

Instruction: Essentials of Good Teaching Benefit Struggling Writers (*Gersten, Baker, & Edwards, 1999*). Teachers are most successful in reaching students with writing delays when their instruction emphasizes the full writing process, provides strategy sheets, offers lots of models of good writing, and gives students timely editorial feedback. Good instructors build their written expression lessons around the 3 stages of writing—planning, writing, and revision—and make those stages clear and explicit. Skilled instructors also provide students with 'think sheets' that outline step-by-step strategies for tackle the different phases of a writing assignment (e.g., taking concise notes from research material; building an outline; proofreading a draft). Students become stronger writers when exposed to different kinds of expressive text, such as persuasive, narrative, and expository writing. Teachers can make students more confident and self-sufficient as writers when they give them access to plentiful examples of good prose models that the student can review when completing a writing assignment. Finally, strong writing teachers provide supportive and timely feedback to students about their writing. When teachers or classmates offer writing feedback to the student, they are honest but also maintain an encouraging tone.

Motivation: Stimulate Interest With an Autobiography Assignment (*Bos & Vaughn, 2002*). Assigning the class to write their own autobiographies can motivate hard-to-reach students who seem uninterested in most writing assignments. Have students read a series of autobiographies of people who interest them. Discuss these biographies with the class. Then assign students to write their own autobiographies. (With the class, create a short questionnaire that students can use to interview their parents and other family members to collect information about their past.) Allow students to read their finished autobiographies for the class.

Organization: Build an Outline by Talking Through the Topic (*The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n.d./23 December 2006*). Students who struggle to organize their notes into a coherent outline can tell others what they know about the topic—and then capture the informal logical structure of that conversation to create a working outline. The student studies notes from the topic and describes what he or she knows about the topic and its significance to a listener. (The student may want to audio-record this conversation for later playback.) After the conversation, the student jots down an outline from memory to capture the structure and main ideas of the discussion. This outline 'kernel' can then be expanded and refined into the framework for a paper.

Organization: 'Reverse Outline' the Draft (*The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n.d./23 December 2006*). Students can improve the internal flow of their compositions through 'reverse outlining'. The student writes a draft of the composition. Next, the student reads through the draft, jotting notes in the margins that signify the main idea of each paragraph or section. Then the student organizes the margin notes into an outline to reveal the organizational structure of the paper. This 'reverse outline' allows the student to note whether sections of the draft are repetitious, are out of order, or do not logically connect with one another.

Planning: Brainstorm to Break the 'Idea' Logjam (*The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n.d./28 December 2006*). Brainstorming is a time-tested method that can help students to generate motivating topics for writing assignments and uncover new ideas to expand and improve their compositions. Here are four brainstorming strategies to teach to students: **FREEWRITING**: The student sets a time limit (e.g., 15 minutes) or length limit (e.g., one hand-written page) and spontaneously writes until the limit is reached. The writer does not judge the writing but simply writes as rapidly as possible, capturing any thought that comes to mind on the topic. Later, the student reviews the freewriting to pick out any ideas, terms, or phrasing that might be incorporated into the writing assignment. **LISTING**: The student selects a topic based on an idea or key term related to the writing assignment. The writer then rapidly brainstorms a list of any items that might possibly relate to the topic. Finally, the writer reviews the list to select items that

might be useful in the assigned composition or trigger additional writing ideas. **SIMILES:** The student selects a series of key terms or concepts linked to the writing assignment. The student brainstorms, using the framework of a simile: “_1_ is like _2_.” The student plugs a key term into the first blank and then generates as many similes as possible (e.g., “A SHIP is like a CITY ON THE SEA.”). **REFERENCES:** The student jots down key ideas or terms from the writing assignment. He or she then browses through various reference works (dictionaries, encyclopedias, specialized reference works on specific subjects) looking randomly for entries that trigger useful ideas. (Writers might try a variation of this strategy by typing assignment-related search terms into GOOGLE or another online search engine.)

Proofreading: Teach A Memory Strategy (*Bos & Vaughn, 2002*). When students regularly use a simple, portable, easily memorized plan for proofreading, the quality of their writing can improve significantly. Create a poster to be put up in the classroom summarizing the SCOPE proofreading elements: (1) **SPELLING:** Are my words spelled correctly; (2) **CAPITALIZATION:** Have I capitalized all appropriate words, including first words of sentences, proper nouns, and proper names?; (3) **ORDER of words:** Is my word order (syntax) correct?; (4) **PUNCTUATION:** Did I use end punctuation and other punctuation marks appropriately? (5) **EXPRESSION of complete thoughts:** Do all of my sentences contain a noun and verb to convey a complete thought? Review the SCOPE proofreading steps by copying a first-draft writing sample onto an overhead and evaluating the sample with the class using each item from the SCOPE poster. Then direct students to pair off and together evaluate their own writing samples using SCOPE. When students appear to understand the use of the SCOPE plan, require that they use this strategy to proofread all written assignments before turning them in.

Proofreading: Use Selective Proofreading With Highlighting of Errors (*Frus, n.d./18 November 2006*). To prevent struggling writers from becoming overwhelmed by teacher proofreading corrections, focus on only 1 or 2 proofreading areas when correcting a writing assignment. Create a student ‘writing skills checklist’ that inventories key writing competencies (e.g., grammar/syntax, spelling, vocabulary, etc.). For each writing assignment, announce to students that you will grade the assignment for overall content but will make proofreading corrections on only 1-2 areas chosen from the writing skills checklist. (Select different proofreading targets for each assignment matched to common writing weaknesses in your classroom.) Also, to prevent cluttering the student’s paper with potentially discouraging teacher comments and editing marks, underline problems in the student’ text with a highlighter and number the highlighted errors sequentially at the left margin of the student paper. Then (if necessary) write teacher comments on a separate feedback sheet to explain the writing errors. (Identify each comment with the matching error-number from the left margin of the student’s worksheet.) With fewer proofreading comments, the student can better attend to the teacher feedback. Also, even a heavily edited student assignment looks neat and tidy when teachers use the highlighting/numbering technique—preventing students from becoming disheartened at the site of an assignment scribbled over with corrective comments.

Spelling: Leverage the Power of Memory Through Cover-Copy-Compare (*Murphy, Hern, Williams, & McLaughlin, 1990*). Students increase their spelling knowledge by copying a spelling word from a correct model and then recopying the same word from memory. Give students a list of 10-20 spelling words, an index card, and a blank sheet of paper. For each word on the spelling list, the student (1) copies the spelling list item onto a sheet of paper, (2) covers the newly copied word with the index card, (3) writes the spelling word again on the sheet (spelling it from memory), and (4) uncovers the copied word and checks to ensure that the word copied from memory is spelled correctly. If that word is spelled incorrectly, the student repeats the sequence above until the word copied from memory is spelled correctly--then moves to the next word on the spelling list.

References

Bos, C.S. & Vaughn, S. (2002). *Strategies for teaching students with learning and behavior problems*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Frus, P. (n.d./18 November 2006). Commenting effectively on student writing. Retrieved November 18, 2006, from http://www.crlt.umich.edu/crlttext/P7_2text.html

Gersten, R., Baker, S., & Edwards, L. (1999). Teaching expressive writing to students with learning disabilities: A meta-analysis. New York: National Center for Learning Disabilities.

Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Larsen, L. (2001). Prevention and intervention of writing difficulties for students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 16, 74-84.

Murphy, J., Hern, C., Williams, R., & McLaughlin, T. (1990). The effects of the copy, cover, and compare approach in increasing spelling accuracy with learning disabled students. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 15, 378-386.

Rathvon, N. (1999). *Effective school interventions*. New York: Guilford Press.

Reid, R. & Lienemann, T.O. (2006). Self-regulated strategy development for written expression with students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Exceptional Children*, 73, 53-68.

The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (n.d.). Brainstorming. Retrieved December 28, 2006, from <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/brainstorming.html>

The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (n.d.). Reorganizing your draft. Retrieved December 23, 2006, from <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/organization.html>

Copyright ©2007 Jim Wright

Integrated Writing Instruction

Students with writing disabilities typically find the act of writing to be both difficult and unrewarding. These students' resulting lack of motivation to write can lock them into a downward spiral, in which they avoid most writing tasks and fail to develop those writing skills in which they are deficient. Indeed, for some students, a diagnosed writing disability may not be neurologically based but instead can be explained by the student's simple lack of opportunities to practice and build competent writing skills.

MacArthur and colleagues (MacArthur, Graham, & Schwartz, 1993) have developed an integrated approach to classroom writing instruction designed to accommodate the special needs of disabled writers, as well as those of their non-disabled peers. In this instructional approach, the student writes about authentic topics that have a 'real-world' purpose and relevance. Student writing is regularly shared with classmates and the instructor, with these audiences creating a sustaining social context to motivate and support the writer. Students receive instruction and feedback in an interactive manner, presented both in lecture format and through writing conferences with classmates. Technology (particularly computer word processing) is harnessed to help the writing disabled student to be more productive and to make use of software writing tools to extend his or her own capabilities in written expression.

The instructor follows a uniform daily instructional framework for writing instruction. First, the instructor checks in with students about the status of their current writing projects, then teaches a mini-lesson, next allows the group time to write and to conference with peers and the teacher, and finally arranges for the group to share or publish their work for a larger audience.

Status-checking. At the start of the writing session, the instructor quickly goes around the room, asking each student what writing goal(s) he or she plans to accomplish that day. The instructor records these responses for all to see.

Mini-Lesson. The instructor teaches a mini-lesson relevant to the writing process. Mini-lessons are a useful means to present explicit writing strategies (e.g., an outline for drafting an opinion essay), as well as a forum for reviewing the conventions of writing. Mini-lessons should be kept short (e.g., 5-10 minutes) to hold the attention of the class.

Student Writing. During the session, substantial time is set aside for students to write. Their writing assignment might be one handed out by the instructor that day or part of a longer composition (e.g., story, extended essay) that the student is writing and editing across multiple days. When possible, student writers are encouraged use computers as aids in composing and editing their work. (Before students can compose efficiently on computers, of course, they must have been trained in keyboarding and use of word-processing software).

Peer & Teacher Conferences. Writers need timely, gentle, focused feedback from readers of their work in order to improve their compositions. At the end of the daily writing block, the student may sit with a classmate to review each other's work, using a structured peer editing strategy. During this discussion time, the teacher also holds brief individual conferences with students to review

their work, have students evaluate how successfully they completed their writing goals for the day, and hear writers' thoughts about how they might plan to further develop a writing assignment.

Group Sharing or Publishing. At the end of each session, writing produced that day is shared with the whole class. Students might volunteer to read passages aloud from their compositions. Another method of sharing might be for the students to post their work on the classroom wall or bulletin board for everyone to read and respond to. Periodically, polished student work might be displayed in a public area of the school for all to read, published in an anthology of school writings, read aloud at school assemblies, or published on the Internet.

References

MacArthur, C., Graham, S., & Schwarz, S. (1993). Integrating strategy instruction and word processing into a process approach to writing instruction. *School Psychology Review*, 22, 671-681).

Sentence Combining: Teaching Rules of Sentence Structure by Doing

Students with poor writing skills often write sentences that lack 'syntactic maturity' (Robinson & Howell, 2008). That is, these writers' sentences often follow a simple, stereotyped format. In public schools, grammar skills have traditionally been taught in isolation to give students the advanced writing knowledge required to master a diverse range of sentence structures. However, isolated grammar instruction appears to have little or no positive impact in helping poor writers become better writers (Graham & Perin, 2007). A promising alternative is to use sentence combining (Graham & Perin, 2007; Strong, 1986). In this approach, students are presented with kernel sentences and given explicit instruction in how to weld these kernel sentences into more diverse sentence types either by using connecting words to combine multiple sentences into one or by isolating key information from an otherwise superfluous sentence and embedding that important information into the base sentence.

In a simple demonstration of sentence combining, a student may generate these two sentences in her composition on the American Revolution: *The American army had few supplies in the winter of 1776. The American army had few trained military leaders.*

The instructor might meet with the student and have the student recopy the two sentences in this format:

The American army had few supplies in the winter of 1776.
The American army had few trained military leaders. (and)

The student would be encouraged to combine the two shorter sentences into a more comprehensive sentence by using the connecting word (coordinating conjunction) 'and' to combine objects: *The American army had few supplies and few trained military leaders in the winter of 1776.*

Formatting Sentence Combining Examples

These simple formatting conventions are used in sentence-combining exercises (Saddler, 2005; Strong, 1986):

- In each example, the base clause (sentence) appears first. Any sentence(s) to be combined or embedded with the base clause appear below that base clause.

Example: Base clause: The dog ran after the bus.
Sentence to be embedded: The dog is yellow.
Student-Generated Solution: *The yellow dog ran after the bus.*

- 'Connecting words' to be used as a sentence-combining tool appear in parentheses at the end of a sentence that is to be combined with the base clause.

Example: Base clause: The car stalled.
Sentence to be combined: The car ran out of gas. (because)
Student-Generated Solution: *The car stalled because it ran out of gas.*

- The element(s) of any sentence to be embedded in the base clause are underlined.

Example: Base clause: The economic forecast resulted in strong stock market gains.

Sentence to be embedded: The economic forecast was upbeat.

Student-Generated Solution: *The upbeat economic forecast resulted in strong stock market gains.*

Using Sentence Combining in Instruction

Teachers who use sentence combining in their writing instruction should follow a direct-instruction approach (Saddler, 2005). The instructor fosters a learning atmosphere that encourages students to take risks when participating in sentence-combining activities. When first introducing sentence-combining to the class, the instructor explains that using varied sentence structures helps writers to better convey meaning. The instructor tells students that there are often multiple correct ways to combine sentences. The instructor completes several sentence-combining examples in front of the group, using a think-aloud approach to show his or her thinking process in successfully combining sentences. Students should then complete sentence-combining examples in pairs or groups, with the instructor circulating through the class to check for student understanding. Eventually, students work independently on sentence combining tasks to demonstrate mastery. They may then be asked to look in their own writing for examples in which they could combine sentences to improve

A listing of types and examples of sentence-combining appears below in Table 1. When creating lessons on sentence combining, instructors should review the potential types of sentence-combining in Table 1 and decide the order in which those types might be presented to their class.

Type of Sentence	Sentence Combining Example
<p>Multiple (Compound) Sentence Subjects or Objects:</p> <p>Two or more subjects can be combined with a conjunction (e.g., <i>or</i>, <i>and</i>).</p> <p>Two or more direct or indirect objects can be combined with a conjunction (e.g., <i>or</i>, <i>and</i>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skyscrapers in the city were damaged in the hurricane. <u>Bridges</u> in the city were damaged in the hurricane. <i>Skyscrapers and bridges in the city were damaged in the hurricane.</i> • When they travel, migratory birds need safe habitat. When they travel, migratory birds need <u>regular supplies of food</u>. <i>When they travel, migratory birds need safe habitat and regular supplies of food.</i>
<p>Adjectives & Adverbs: When a sentence simply contains an adjective or adverb that modifies the noun or verb of another sentence, the adjective or adverb from the first sentence can be embedded in the related sentence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry regions are at risk for chronic water shortages. <u>Overpopulated</u> regions are at risk for chronic water shortages. <i>Dry and overpopulated regions are at risk for chronic water shortages.</i> • Health care costs have risen nationwide. Those health care costs have risen <u>quickly</u>. <i>Health care costs have risen quickly nationwide.</i>

<p>Connecting Words: One or more sentences are combined with connecting words.</p> <p>Coordinating conjunctions (e.g., <i>and, but</i>) link sentences on an equal basis.</p> <p>Subordinating conjunctions (e.g., <i>after, until, unless, before, while, because</i>) link sentences with one of the sentences subordinate or dependent on the other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The house was falling apart. No one seemed to care. (but) <i>The house was falling apart, but no one seemed to care.</i> • The glaciers began to melt. The earth's average temperature increased. (because) <i>The glaciers began to melt because the earth's average temperature increased.</i>
<p>Relative Clauses: Sentence contains an embedded, subordinate clause that modifies a noun.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The artist was the most popular in the city. The artist painted watercolors of sunsets. (who) <i>The artist who painted watercolors of sunsets was the most popular in the city.</i>
<p>Appositives: Sentence contains two noun phrases that refer to the same object. When two sentences refer to the same noun, one sentence be reduced to an appositive and embedded in the other sentence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The explorer paddled the kayak across the raging river. The explorer was <u>an expert in handling boats</u>. <i>The explorer, an expert in handling boats, paddled the kayak across the raging river.</i>
<p>Possessive Nouns: A sentence that describes possession or ownership can be reduced to a possessive noun and embedded in another sentence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some historians view the Louisiana Purchase as the most important expansion of United States territory. The Louisiana Purchase was <u>President Jefferson's</u> achievement. <i>Some historians view President Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase as the most important expansion of United States territory.</i>

References

Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools – A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC Alliance for Excellent Education.

Robinson, L. K., & Howell, K. W. (2008). Best practices in curriculum-based evaluation & written expression. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp. 439-452). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Saddler, B. (2005). Sentence combining: A sentence-level writing intervention. *The Reading Teacher, 58*, 468-471.

Strong, W. (1986). *Creative approaches to sentence combining*. Urbana, OL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skill & National Council of Teachers of English.

School-Wide Strategies for Managing...

STUDY SKILLS / ORGANIZATION

A service of www.interventioncentral.org

As students transition to middle and high school, they are expected to depend less on the teacher to manage their instruction and to put increasing energy into becoming self-managing learners. But students must master essential study and organizational skills before they can function as independent learners. Individuals with strong study and organization skills are able to break class and homework assignments into subtasks and use time efficiently to complete those assignments, save and store graded papers and handouts for later retrieval, regularly review class notes and course readings, and practice effective study techniques. Instructors can accelerate the development of students into self-managing learners by explicitly teaching and evaluating study and organization skills and by delivering structured lessons that students can easily follow and capture in notes. Here are a range of ideas that can assist students to study more effectively and become more organized:

Independent Work. Create Customized ‘Common Mistakes’ Checklists (*U.S. Department of Education, 2004*). Students can develop an individualized checklist of the kinds of errors that they commonly commit on independent assignments and use this checklist to reduce or eliminate mistakes before turning in those assignments. As a class exercise, give several examples to your students of common mistakes that you find on their assignments (e.g., failure to show all work on math problems; incomplete entries on term-paper outlines). Next, have the class brainstorm a list of mistakes that they are most likely to make. Then direct each student to review the class list and create a customized checklist by selecting the 4-5 mistakes that he or she is most likely to commit. Direct students to keep their customized error checklists and use them to review their assignments before turning in.

Independent Work: Assign an Adult Advisor (*U.S. Department of Education, 2004*). Struggling students will do a better job of managing their many academic work and study requirements when they can have informal weekly meetings with an adult advisor. The advisor can be any school staff member who has a good relationship with the student. The role of the advisor is to communicate with other members of the student’s team to ensure that the student is caught up with all homework and classwork assignments and is doing a satisfactory job of preparing for tests and quizzes. The advisor should plan to meet with the student at a fixed time at the start of each week for a brief meeting (1) to review academic progress, (2) help the student to get organized for upcoming assignments and prepare for tests, and (3) provide the student with encouragement and ‘mini-skills’ lessons in organization and study skills as needed.

Independent Work: Have Students Break Larger Tasks into Smaller Sub-Tasks (*U.S. Department of Education, 2004*). Students who easily become overwhelmed when given a large assignment to do independently can boost their confidence when taught first to break that assignment down into smaller, more manageable sub-tasks. Select an upcoming assignment that students are expected to complete on their own (e.g., term paper, homework assignment with multiple math problems). Demonstrate for the class or to the individual student how to partition the larger assignment into smaller steps or ‘chunks’. Have the student(s) complete the assignment independently, one sub-task at a time, using your work plan. On the next assignment, have the student(s) subdivide the task into chunks to create their own work plan while you observe and provide feedback.

Independent Work: Teach Students to Adapt Worksheets (*U.S. Department of Education, 2004*). If students seem to struggle with the format of complex worksheets, teach them tricks to reduce the complexity or ‘busyness’ of the sheet. If students appear to become anxious or to lose their place when given a worksheet with a large number of math problems, for example, suggest that they

fold the page or use a blank piece of paper to hide all problems except the one on which they are currently working. Or if a double-sided worksheet has a complex informational graphic (e.g., a map) on one side of the page and questions to be answered on the flip side of the worksheet, give the student an extra copy of that worksheet so that the student can look at the questions and the graphic at the same time.

Instruction: Preview & Review Lesson Objectives (*Beyda, Zentall, & Ferko, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2004*). Teachers can help students to retain the key points of a lesson by previewing the important learning objectives, labeling important points during the lesson, and reviewing those points at the close of the instructional session. Open the lesson by telling students what they will be learning that day and the materials that they will need to accomplish the lesson. During the lesson, emphasize important information that students should write into their class notes. At the end of the lesson, briefly review the central points again to improve student retention.

Instruction: Signal Key Words or Concepts That Will Be on the Test (*Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002*). Teachers can improve students' motivation and boost their performance on tests by writing the examinations first and then structuring course content and review activities to help students to successfully pass these tests. The instructor constructs the test in advance so that it contains the essential elements of course content that students must master. During instruction, whenever the teacher presents to the class any concept, fact, or operation that will appear on the test, the instructor announces that 'this will be on the test' as a cue to alert students to attend closely to the information. The teacher also selects review activities that allow students to practice and master course material before they are tested on that material.

Study Skills: Effective Studying Requires Preparation & Follow-Through (*University of North Dakota Learning Center, n.d.*). Effective study habits require that the student prepare before class to more fully understand the instructional content, attend carefully during class for clues about what facts or concepts the teacher views as most important, and quickly review notes after class to fill in any missing information and to cement understanding. In preparation for the class period, the student completes any assigned reading, and looks over notes and quickly skims the reading from the previous class session. During class, the student focuses on the instructor, listening carefully to how the instructor 'cues' the class that information is important (e.g., tone of voice, repetition, notes written on the board). If the teacher announces that a particular fact, concept, or idea will appear on a future test, the student records this information in his or her notes. Within 24 hours after class, the student reviews the class notes to help him or her to capture this course information in long-term memory. The student also uses this review opportunity to add any additional details, to reword notes to clarify their meaning, or to check with other students or the teacher to fill in any gaps in the notes.

Study Skills: Study Actively (*University of North Dakota Learning Center, n.d.; Wright, 2002*). Students get much more out of study sessions when they use strategies to actively review the material—such as summarizing main ideas from passages, formulating possible test questions from class notes, reciting information aloud, and studying with others. When reviewing readings from the course, the student should pause after important passages to attempt to summarize the main idea, or 'gist sentence' of each passage. While reviewing class notes, the student should attempt to identify concepts or facts from the notes that are likely to appear on an upcoming quiz or test. The student then formulates a possible test question that would be answered by the selection from his or her notes. Some students also find that they retain information more effectively during review when they occasionally read aloud sections from their course readings or class notes. Studying with others is another good method for reviewing course material, as students can motivate and encourage one another during the study session.

Study Skills: Teach a Structured Note-Taking Process (*Pauk, 1989*). Students benefit in two ways when using a highly structured note-taking process such as the Cornell System: Not only do they recall more information from lectures because they made the effort to capture it in the form

of notes, but students also have a more complete set of notes to which they can refer when studying for quizzes and tests. The Cornell Notetaking System is organized into the following steps: (1) The student draws a vertical line on blank lined note paper. The line separates the page into a left-margin section that is 2.5 inches in width and another on the right that is 6 inches in width. (2) During reading or lectures, the student jots all notes in the 6-inch section of the page. (3) After leaving class or finishing the reading, the student reduces the notes into key words or key phrases. These condensed words or phrases are jotted into the 2.5-inch left margin of the page. (4) When reviewing course material, the student looks over his or her notes and jots down possible questions from the content that might appear on a test. The student then covers the notes (6-inch section of the page) and attempts to recite answers to the questions that he or she has created--using the key words or phrases in the left margin as prompts. (5) The student reviews notes periodically (e.g., 2-3 times per week), repeating the procedure outlined in step 4.

Study Skills: Use Student Study Schedule (*Wright, 2002*). A daily study schedule can ensure that the student makes the most efficient use of study time. Each day, the student makes a written schedule for homework and study. The study schedule should also include time for leisure activities—and the student should be sure to limit leisure activities to the time allotted. A study schedule has greater weight if the student's parent(s) monitor the student's adherence to the daily schedule.

Work Materials: Organize the Backlog of Old Papers (*Sirotowitz, Davis, & Parker, 2003*). Students are much better organized when they can identify old papers that should be saved for later review, have a system for labeling and filing these archived papers, and stay caught up by filing papers promptly. The teacher or parent (helping adult) first assists the student in carrying out a 'paper search', rummaging through the student's backpack, school locker, bedroom, notebook, or any other location where old papers may have collected. Next, student and helping adult sort through the pile of amassed papers, deciding which should be tossed in the trash and which should be saved. (Candidate papers to save include old tests, teacher handouts, and graded homework.) Then student and adult write at the top of each saved page the subject, the approximate date that the paper was created or handed out, and any other important identifying information (e.g., the textbook chapter or page that a series of handwritten notes were drawn from or are linked to). For each subject, label a manila folder. File all old papers for that subject in the folder, organized by date or by chapter/page number (depending on which scheme seems a more useful way to group the material). Put all folders of sorted papers into a single file cabinet drawer, crate, or other easily accessible location. Then encourage the student to sort through old papers each day and file those that are to be saved away in the appropriate folder. Also, remind the student to review the contents of folders when studying for quizzes and tests.

Work Materials: Schedule Regular 'Clean Outs' (*Gleason, Colvin, & Archer, 1991; U.S. Department of Education, 2004*). Students are most productive when they are periodically given time and guidance to organize their work- and storage spaces to better manage the 'paperflow' of school work. Prepare a class mini-lesson to present suggestions on how your students should organize their desk or other class workspace, backpack, and/or locker. Work with your class to develop organizational tips (e.g., what does belong in a locker and what does not) and a rubric to judge the degree to which each student's work- and storage spaces are appropriately organized. Schedule time periodically for the entire class or selected students to organize their work and storage spaces under your supervision. Have students refer to the class rubric and provide teacher feedback as they organize their spaces.

References

Beyda, S. D., Zentall, S. S., & Ferko, D. J. K. (2002). The relationship between teacher practices and the task-appropriate and social behavior of students with behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 27*, 236-255.

Gleason, M.M., Colvin, G., & Archer, A.L. (1991). Interventions for improving study skills. In G. Stoner, M.R. Shinn, & H.M. Walker (Eds.) *Interventions for achievement and behavior problems*. National Association of School Psychologists: Silver Springs, MD.

Pauk, W. (1989). *How to study in college* (4th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Sirostowitz, S., Davis, L., & Parker, H. C. (2003). *Study strategies for early school success: Seven steps to improve your learning*. Plantation, FL: Specialty Press.

Sprick, R. S., Borgmeier, C., & Nolet, V. (2002). Prevention and management of behavior problems in secondary schools. In M. A. Shinn, H. M. Walker & G. Stoner (Eds.), *Interventions for academic and behavior problems II: Preventive and remedial approaches* (pp.373-401). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

U.S. Department of Education (2004). *Teaching children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Instructional strategies and practices*. Retrieved August 20, 2005, from <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/needs/speced/adhd/adhd-resource-pt2.doc>

University of North Dakota Learning Center (n.d.). *Making notes instead of taking notes*. Retrieved September 25, 2006, from <http://www.und.edu/dept/ULC/study/makingnotes.html>

Wright, J. (2002) *Managing test anxiety: Ideas for students*. Retrieved September 23, 2006, from <http://www.interventioncentral.org/htmldocs/interventions/study/testtips.php>

Copyright ©2006 Jim Wright

Teacher/Team: _____ Date: _____ Student: _____

Student Problem Definition #1: _____

Student Problem Definition #2: _____

[Optional] Person(s) assisting with intervention planning process: _____

- Interventions: Essential Elements (Witt et al., 2004)**
- Clear problem-definition(s)
 - Baseline data
 - Goal for improvement
 - Progress-monitoring plan

Intervention Description	Intervention Delivery	Check-Up Date	Assessment Data	
Describe each intervention that you plan to use to address the student's concern(s).	List key details about delivery of the intervention, such as: (1) where & when the intervention will be used; (2) the adult-to-student ratio; (3) how frequently the intervention will take place; (4) the length of time each session of the intervention will last;.	Select a date when the data will be reviewed to evaluate the intervention.	Note what classroom data will be used to establish baseline, set a goal for improvement, and track the student's progress during this intervention.	
			Type(s) of Data to Be Used:	
			Baseline	Goal by Check-Up
			Type(s) of Data to Be Used:	
			Baseline	Goal by Check-Up

Witt, J. C., VanDerHeyden, A. M., & Gilbertson, D. (2004). Troubleshooting behavioral interventions. A systematic process for finding and eliminating problems. *School Psychology Review, 33*, 363-383.