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## Using Self-Regulated Strategy Development To Teach Middle School Writing

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USING SELF-REGULATED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT TO TEACH MIDDLE SCHOOL  
WRITING

by

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A final paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts  
in Teaching

Hamline University

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## Abstract

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Being able to write well is a skill critical to students' success in higher education. Yet standardized test scores reveal that many students are moving into high school and college without these writing skills. Writing is a complex task; in addition to content knowledge, students must use self-regulation skills (including staying focused on the task, working through frustrations) to see success. This capstone project sought to answer the question: *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?* The result is a series of lesson plans that seek to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of middle school students by combining academic instruction with the teaching and practice of self-regulation skills.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Fundamental Question

#### Introduction

As a 7th grade English teacher, my practice revolves around finding strategies I can use to increase the reading, writing, and discussion skills of my students. For the past several years, my district has focused on individualized reading growth. By focusing on reading growth, though, my colleagues and I have noticed that our emphasis on other aspects of English, mainly writing, has been neglected. Many of my students have difficulty expressing themselves in clear and coherent ways. They also struggle with sustaining the mental focus required for creating a quality writing product. Given my students' difficulty expressing themselves in writing, my capstone question became: *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?* It is important to me that I find new ways of supporting my seventh grade students in becoming competent writers rather than struggling writers.

When students struggle with writing, it does not just impact their success in the English classroom. Writing skills play a part in many content areas, particularly social studies and science. In addition, writing ability is continually cited by high schools and colleges, nationwide, as a skill critical for success in higher education (Conley, 2007). I was recently having a conversation with an administrator at my school, a very accomplished man who is now in pursuit of his doctorate. He told me that a professor once advised him not to pursue a master's degree

because of his struggle with writing. Thankfully, he did not listen, and he continued working toward that higher degree. The example does illustrate, however, the importance of writing in higher education conversations.

In my classroom, I have noticed that writing tends to be a challenging task for many struggling, at-risk students. This includes the many students I teach who have disabilities. While these students may excel in discussions, many of them flounder when asked to complete a writing assignment. The writing process requires patience and attention to task, areas in which many students with disabilities struggle. Certainly, many students without academic disabilities have difficulty with the process as well. Hyperactivity, behavioral issues, and a decreased ability to sustain focus, however, certainly do not lend themselves to the independent, mentally-taxing, lengthy work that writing a quality piece tends to require.

When time after time they find themselves unsuccessful, the students I teach often begin to develop a negative association with writing, which makes the task all the more difficult. For example, I often begin my lessons with fun, creative writing responses. Students are asked to write for the full amount of time given (usually about three minutes). One prompt I used this past year was, “Imagine you were trapped in your favorite store overnight. What would you do?” A confident writer might take a few seconds to think, then begin writing. She may stop periodically to consider her next words, but her pencil would, in general, keep moving. At the end of the three minutes, she’d have a few descriptive sentences describing a fun night in her favorite store.

On the other hand, a struggling writer might begin by peppering me with questions about this prompt. “What? What am I supposed to write? I don’t know what store is my favorite. What do you mean what would I do?” She’s so uncertain, so convinced of the mistakes she will make,



she wants the answer spoon-fed to her. The hardest students, the ones I worry about most, are the students who hear this fun, non-graded prompt, and yet they refuse to pick up a pencil.

Sometimes this refusal stems from defiance. But often, it seems this defiance is the result of years of struggle, resulting in a student's unwillingness to even try.

Research (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008) has demonstrated that teaching students specific strategies for working through academic difficulties can be a successful way to help them become better writers. For example, students might be taught to pause when completing a challenging assignment, take a deep breath, and think "*Wait. I learned this. What's the next step in the strategy? That's right . . .*" Robinson's (2017) research into the adolescent brain supported the practice and explicit teaching of this type of metacognitive thinking. Just like most academic tasks, middle school students differ in their ability to tackle this kind of metacognitive thinking (Robinson, 2017), but, excitingly for middle school teachers, research (Crone, as cited by Robinsons, 2017) has demonstrated that struggling students can be taught successfully to strengthen these skills.

Many times, these struggling students are the ones most in need of the voice the written word provides. At the start of my writing unit, every year, I ask students why it is important to write well. Their typical answers include high school, college, job searches, resumes, emails, etc. It usually falls to me to point out, though, what I think is the most important reason: writing gives individuals power. It gives us a voice in our society. It gives us the ability to write to our legislators, to communicate messages of inequality or discrimination, to organize behind causes we believe in.

Is it possible to be successful in our society without being able to write well? Certainly. But being able to write well, clearly and persuasively, increases the probability that someone out there will listen. The underserved, impoverished, and all too often, silent members of our community, who tend to also be our most at-risk students, are the very students most in need of having a voice (Christensen, 2000). As Linda Christensen (2000), noted author and teacher wrote, “People who lack reading and writing skills have difficulty expressing who they are. Their words are strangled and they learn to be silent” (p. VI). Giving students the tools to access their written voice helps combat that silence.

After noticing the pattern of struggle and disillusionment with writing in my classroom, I sought to find strategies for writing instruction that have been successful with young writers. This led to self-regulated strategy development, or SRSD. According to Harris, Graham, Mason, and Friedlander (2008), self-regulated strategy development combines specific instructional stages with an emphasis on self-efficacy, thereby attempting to meet both the academic and social/emotional demands of the writing process. My research question then became: *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?* Based on my research, I developed a series of lessons that uses SRSD to teach expository writing to students. The goal of my lessons was to both strengthen students’ writing skills, as well as increase their positive personal associations with the writing process. As I began this process of inquiry and discovery, it was necessary to reflect on my own educational path and experiences, to place myself, as the researcher, in the context of my study. Following my professional and personal experiences is a statement of purpose. This focuses my project, and makes the project’s goal and intention clear. Finally, the

chapter ends with summary highlighting the most important sections, before continuing into Chapter Two.

### **Personal and Professional Story**

My intention was not always to be a teacher. Instead, in 2013, I graduated with a bachelor's degree in English. During the 2013-2014 school year, I worked for the Reading Corps. This position enabled me to continue my studies while also placing me in a school setting. After many short term experiences in schools (volunteer mentoring, shadowing, etc.), working as a Reading Corps tutor allowed me to see the ins and outs of how a school functions. This job allowed me to develop working relationships with other teachers, administrators, and reading experts, as well as collaborate with these other professionals about the best interests of the students.

During my Reading Corps experience, my day began with my morning duty--greeting students and passing out breakfast--and ended with an after school creative writing class I developed and taught. I highly enjoyed becoming involved in the school community in this way. My job as a tutor, though, was limited. Reading tutors were given scripts and deliberate instructions, and I felt unable to bring my own thoughts, experiences, and ideas into the structure. I was eager for the chance to bring my own ideas to my own classroom.

In the fall of 2014, while pursuing my teaching license, I worked as an assistant teacher at a Montessori preschool. The Montessori method emphasizes the role of the teacher as a facilitator, and it was fascinating and highly educational to be part of system that values student creativity and independence to that degree (Montessori, 1964). Again, I loved the experience of collaboration within the school community. Again, this experience made me eager to have my

own classroom, where I could take my insights from these positions and create my own class community.

In 2015, I became a 7th grade English teacher at a public middle school, a position I have maintained for the last three years. In this position, I teach sections of Honors English, for students who have elected to be part of a more rigorous learning community; Regular English, for students who, theoretically, are at grade level; Co-taught English, a blend of regular education and special education students (students with learning disabilities, emotional behavior disorders, and/or autism spectrum disorder), co-taught with a 7th grade special education teacher; and Extended English, a reading instruction class designed for non-special education/non-English learner students who tested below grade level on standardized assessments. Next year, the special education department at my school is reshaping their curriculum. This means that I will likely no longer be co-teaching with a special education teacher but will still have special education students in my classes. My special education students will be more spread out into the various sections of Regular English, instead of grouped together in the co-taught classes.

This change has been a part of my desire to pursue this research direction. Even while using the co-teaching model, I felt that my partner and I did not adequately meet the needs of our struggling students, many of whom were in special education. Special education students are deliberately given an individualized education plan (IEP) that is meant to allow them success in the general education classroom. Even with those plans in place, however, many students at my middle school, both SpED and non-SpED students, are failing one or more class(es). An inability to write effectively, as demonstrated on our standardized reading/language usage scores, seems

to be a part of that problem. In upcoming years, I know I will continue to have struggling students in my classes. Without the support of a co-teacher, it will be more important than ever to have strategies that target the improvement of students below grade level, strategies that also benefit all students. The following section details the focus of my capstone project in my statement of purpose.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this capstone was to develop a series of lessons that used self-regulated strategy development (Harris, et al., 2008) to teach expository writing to struggling middle school students. As stated before, writing is a skill that, while taught primarily in English class, crosses into multiple content areas. The ability to write well is critical to success in higher education as well as, arguably, success in most careers. It is crucial, then, that as educators we create students who are willing and able to tackle writing tasks put before them.

To support the development of willing and able student writers, I created a series of lessons that follow the six stages of SRSD: develop background knowledge, discuss it, model it, memorize it, support it, and independent performance (Harris, et al., 2008). SRSD recognizes that the writing process is not solely academic; many students disengage from the writing process not because they do not know how to conquer the writing task, but rather because they feel unable to engage in the repetitive, often frustrating cycle of drafting, editing, and revising (Harris, et al., 2008). Therefore, the lessons sought to encourage at-risk students to believe that they are capable of the tasks and stamina necessary for success in the writing process.

These lessons may prove beneficial for other English teachers as well. Based on my experience as a teacher, many students are arriving in our classrooms with skills below grade

level in writing and reading. Unfortunately, the number of students who arrive unprepared is not falling; instead, that number seems to be rising from year to year. As general education teachers, we need strategies that allow us to work with and help these students that are falling behind, without sacrificing the learning of students who are at grade level. I believe that many teachers of writing, from elementary to high school, would benefit from understanding these strategies to help their underachieving students.

### **Summary**

Until that first day of school, I do not know the learners that will walk into my classroom. I do know that every year my classroom will be filled with individuals of differing personalities, learning strengths, and learning difficulties. As a teacher, I must be equipped to greet each one of them as they walk through my doors, and be ready to help them grow as learners and individuals.

The ability to write well is a skill that will serve students throughout their secondary and postsecondary educational paths. Although middle school students have a few years before that transition to college, middle school instruction plays an important role in readying students for that eventual success. Being college ready means being able to write well (Conley, 2007).

Self-regulated strategy development (Harris, et al., 2008) is an instructional program that has been found to have success with struggling students (What Works Clearinghouse, 2017).

Because of this, I sought to answer the question, *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?*

The remainder of this capstone strives to answer this question through research and reflection.

Chapter Two details a literature review of experts who have also explored this topic. Chapter

Three contains a description of the lessons I have developed. Finally, Chapter Four is a reflection of my research and experience.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of the Research Literature

#### Overview of Chapter Two

This chapter analyzed research regarding writing strategies that has shown positive outcomes for student growth in an attempt to answer the question: *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?*

This literature review began by discussing the relevance of writing skills in conversations about higher education, particularly focusing on the writing skills needed for success at the high school and college levels. Since the focus of this capstone was expository writing, a definition and examples of expository writing are provided. The nation's current trend with writing skills is examined by analyzing standardized testing scores. Finally, research has shown that writing is difficult for students with learning disabilities, and some experts have analyzed the specifics of this challenge.

The next section of the literature review explored the unique learning characteristics of the average middle school student. The intention of this project was to create lessons that best address the academic, social, and emotional needs of the average middle school student. Common Core curriculum has been adopted by the majority of the United States, so it is important to look to those writing standards to see the expectations for writing instruction and skills at the middle school level (The NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2010). Based on the cognitive strengths and



weaknesses of the average middle school student (for example, middle schoolers are often very motivated by rewards), adolescent brain researchers suggested teaching strategies that are thought to engage students best (Robinson, 2017). Finally, middle school students have certain developmental needs, and a successful teacher finds ways to meet these needs in the classroom (Wormeli, 2014). Teachers can better meet the social and emotional needs of students in the classroom by creating lessons that utilize developmentally-mindful strategies.

The final part of this literature review focused on the primary writing strategy used in this project: self-regulated strategy development, or SRSD (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008). First, SRSD and its development are described. The description looked in depth at the combination of deliberate academic structure and self-regulation skills, and how the two interact in the lessons presented by the developers. The next part of the section analyzed the various case studies of researchers who have utilized self-regulated strategy development to teach writing skills. Researchers have studied the use of SRSD with different types of students, including its use in both the general education classroom, as well as the special education classroom.

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on writing instruction for middle school students. This research informed this capstone project, which served to answer the question: *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?* This review of literature was particularly focused on strategies that show growth for special education students, but that have also been shown to be beneficial for whole group instruction, so as to understand the benefits and limitations of the strategy's use in the general education classroom. To answer this question fully, and to develop a capstone project that considered the experts who have explored similar

questions, this capstone explored the importance of writing skills in today's world, the academic, social, and emotional needs of middle school students, and case studies that have utilized self-regulated strategy development.

### **Postsecondary Writing**

It is impossible to overstate the importance of writing skills in conversations about higher education. In middle and high school, students might be accustomed to writing primarily in their English classes. In contrast, Conley (2007) wrote that in college students can expect to be writing in nearly every academic course. In particular, college students frequently use skills relating to descriptive, expository, and persuasive writing (Conley, 2007).

This capstone led to the creation of lessons designed to teach expository writing. Expository writing asks students to “investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, expound on the idea, and set forth an argument concerning that idea in a clear and concise manner. This can be accomplished through comparison and contrast, definition, example, the analysis of cause and effect, etc” (The Writing Lab, 2018, para 1). Many standardized writing assessments include an expository writing component. The Learning Express Writing Team (2003) gave several example expository essay prompts:

Describe a family celebration that has special meaning for you.

Math is a required subject. Explain why it is so important.

Discuss the causes of and problems resulting from teenage smoking.

Describe how communication has changed in the past 20 years.

Explain the meaning of diversity. (pp. 52-53)

Conley (2007) also noted that students must also be able to independently navigate the writing process-- drafting, editing, and revising-- on their own to create a polished final product. The skills identified by Conley (2007) are important in college courses, as it becomes more important than ever for students to be able to adequately summarize, analyze, and synthesize complex information.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2017) highlighted that not every high school graduate is ready for the challenge of postsecondary education. According to the NCES (2017), only 59% of students who entered a four year degree program in 2009 completed that degree within six years, by 2015. This means that 41% of students entering in 2009 are not graduating with a degree six years later. These statistics indicate a large number of students are either dropping out of college or taking many years to complete a degree.

Certainly, students may drop out of college for many reasons. Financial constraints, personal challenges, and other factors may all stand in the way of a student's collegiate success. However, it is likely that some students may be dropping out because they lack the skills to succeed in postsecondary school. One way that universities have sought to help students who attend college without the essential skills they need for success is through remedial classes. These remedial classes were most commonly offered in reading, mathematics, and writing, and they are designed to help students sharpen their skills in these content areas (Center for Community College Student Engagement, as cited in Schak, Metzger, Bass, McCann, & English, 2017).

In the 2011-2012 academic school year, about one-third of first year undergraduates in the United States reported taking at least one remedial course, and for community college

students, the number was even higher at forty percent (U.S. Department of Education, as cited in Schak et al., 2017). Looking closer, among 2003-2004 postsecondary students who enrolled at a two year institution, 28% of total students enrolled took a remedial reading/writing class; in that same year, 11% of total students enrolled at four year institutions took a remedial reading/writing course (NCES, as cited in Schak et al., 2017). These statistics demonstrated that a good number of our high school students are beginning college without the writing skills college professors deem necessary for success.

Amongst the research community, there is much debate about the effectiveness of remedial coursework. Often, students are placed in remedial classes on the basis of a single assessment (Schak et al., 2017). Some researchers believe colleges are over-placing students in these remedial courses, particularly since criteria for entrance into remedial courses can vary from college to college (Hassel & Giordano, 2015).

Additionally, remedial courses are costly. According to data obtained by New America, college students and families paid approximately \$1.3 billion in annual out-of-pocket costs for remediation courses (Schak et al., 2017). Remedial courses also often require students to spend more time paying college tuition to complete a degree. Ensuring that our students are well prepared for the writing demands of college, and therefore do not need these remediation classes, seems by far the better option. This capstone project will seek to strengthen writing skills in the middle school classroom, placing students on a path to becoming more confident, more skilled collegiate level writers.

### **Writing Achievement Trends**

One way national experts assess the writing skills of our nation's students is through standardized testing. In 2007 and 2011, 8th grade students nationwide took a writing assessment. For this assessment, students were asked to use their writing skills to persuade, to explain, and to convey experience (real and imagined) (NAEP, 2012). Students were scored on their development and organization of ideas, as well as their language facility and conventions (NAEP, 2012). In 2007, 70% of eighth grade students tested as less than proficient on this assessment (NAEP, 2008). Unfortunately, that number is continuing to grow. In 2011, 74% of eighth grade students tested as less than proficient on the same assessment (NAEP, 2012). The results of the latest assessment, taken in 2017, will be published in late 2018 (NAEP, 2017).

The picture is even bleaker for students who report having a disability. In 2007, only 6% of students with disabilities achieved a score at or above proficient (NAEP, 2008). More than half of these students were given accommodations on the writing test (NAEP, 2008). In 2011, only 5% of students with disabilities achieved a score at or above proficient (NAEP, 2012).

Standardized tests only reveal so much. Many teachers acknowledge that these tests are given in isolation, and they often do not illustrate the individual growth teachers see on a day to day basis. Many other factors also influence these scores, including student motivation, student compliance with taking the test, and student state of mind the day of the test. Perhaps one way to improve these scores may be by creating lessons that appeal to the developmental needs of adolescent students. This topic will be explored in the next section.

### **Teaching Recommended for Middle School Students**

This capstone project was mindful of teaching practices that best meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of middle school students. This section of the review begins by

exploring the writing standards embedded in the common core curriculum, which has been adopted by the majority of the United States (The NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2010). It then describes the particular challenges of adolescence, and how those impact the classroom. Adolescence is a unique time in a person's life, and a successful teacher navigates and utilizes a middle schooler's strengths and weaknesses, rather than battling against these proclivities.

The NGA Center/CCSSO (2010) noted that the Common Core State Standards were first developed in 2009 in an effort to make educational practices more consistent and universal across the United States. The majority of the states have adopted these standards. The common core standards differ from previous standards in that they suggest that the practice of literacy and writing skills are the responsibility of all content areas, not simply English. Thus, the common core includes literacy standards for social studies, science, and technical areas. That being said, there are specific writing standards for each grade, kindergarten through twelfth, and the standards progress in complexity as you move up the grade levels. Since this capstone is created for seventh grade students, those standards were the focus of analysis. Most grade level standards, though, loosely correlate to the seventh grade ones, again, varying in complexity depending on the grade level. There are ten seventh grade writing standards (The NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010).

Analysis of the standards reveals four major groupings. First, students should be asked to complete different types of writing tasks, including argumentative, expository, and narrative forms. The organization of their written work should correspond to the type of writing task they have been asked to perform. Second, students should complete various writing assignments that

follow the writing process, including revising and editing their work. Third, students should be asked to gather research to support their ideas. Finally, students should be asked to write in a variety of different circumstances, for lengthy time periods and short time periods, and for different tasks, purposes, and audiences (The NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010).

These lessons created in this capstone project address the following standard:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content (The NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010, English Language Arts Standards, Writing, Grade 7, Text Types and Purposes, [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2](#)).

This standard includes several benchmarks, which were also addressed by the capstone project. These benchmarks include the ability to introduce and organize ideas clearly. Students should support their topic with relevant details and examples. They should use language and style appropriate for the task and topic, as well as transitions that allow the writing to flow from idea to idea. Finally, students should provide a conclusion that resolves the writing and is appropriate based on the topic (The NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010, English Language Arts Standards, Writing, Grade 7, Text Types and Purposes, [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2](#)).

This standard set the groundwork for this capstone project by establishing the content and reasoning behind the skills included in the lesson plans. The next section contains a review of the research that explores the best means of teaching these skills to middle school students.

### **The Adolescent Brain**

The adolescent brain is different from the adult brain, and a successful middle school teacher understands and appreciates these differences. In fact, among one of its sixteen

characteristics of an effective middle school, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) included leaders who “are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices” (Lounsbury, 2010, p. 44).

Robinson (2017) explored the adolescent brain with interesting findings. Her study found that students learn best when placed in situations where they experience the following: interdisciplinary teaching, service learning opportunities, healthy competition, controversial topics, metacognitive skills, and social learning.

Robinson (2017) found that students learn best when they experience interdisciplinary teaching; interdisciplinary teaching involves teaching the same concept in different ways, in different class contexts. This is essential for middle school students, for as Robinson (2017) described:

. . . adolescent brains’ developing tendency to rearrange and prune information means that a simple concept heard once, in a single class, may be quickly forgotten, but, those ideas and skills that they hear and use in many contexts are likely to become part of their long term understanding. (p. 31)

This science supports the Common Core’s approach to literacy and writing standards, which, as stated previously, require that these skills become the responsibility of all classroom teachers, not simply English teachers.

Like most adults, adolescents want the information they are learning to be relevant to their life experience (Robinson, 2017). Middle school teachers should take caution, though. Amongst his 12 top demotivators for middle school students, Wormeli (2014) included “being told how important today’s lesson will be in high school and beyond. (Instead, help kids live this



one week of their lives powerfully)” (p. 30). The more relevant a teacher can make content to an adolescent’s current life stage, the more successful. Robinson (2017) suggested service learning opportunities as a means of increasing the immediacy of this relevance for middle school students. Service learning experiences allow for students to witness and fulfill pressing needs in a community; relevance becomes obvious.

Robinson (2017) also found that adolescents benefit from healthy competition, social learning, and controversial topics. These three concepts often intertwine. The sense of satisfaction and pride that comes from winning a competition is very rewarding. Adolescent brains, in comparison with other age groups, are very sensitive to reward stimuli (Albert & Steinberg, 2011). The reward motivation is compounded when it is linked with social stimuli (Crone, as cited in Robinson, 2017). In fact, adolescent brain research has shown that “stimuli that seem to elicit the strongest response are social stimuli” (Robinson, 2017, p. 34).

Additionally, adolescents are also often drawn to controversial topics, as their own thoughts and beliefs begin to take shape and potentially differ from those of their parents (Robinson, 2017). Based on this research, learning activities that include group work, partner work, students teaching other students, competitive review games, debate, and group discussions are likely to be highly motivational for middle school students.

Finally, Robinson’s (2017) research revealed that adolescents benefit from lessons that train their metacognitive thinking. For Robinson (2017), these metacognitive thinking skills include the development of “strengthened response inhibition, enhanced ability to shift within and between tasks, and more efficient updating and altering of their working memory during a cognitive task” (Blakemore & Robbins, as cited in Robinson, 2017, p. 33). She also found that

students differ in their ability to tackle this metacognitive thinking (Robinson, 2017), and, notably, students that struggle with these type of thinking can be taught to strengthen these skills (Crone, as cited in Robinson, 2017). These findings are exciting for teachers of self-regulated strategy development, which will be featured in this capstone project, as they suggest that explicitly teaching self-regulation skills to students (for example, teaching a student who gets frustrated easily to take a deep breath and reset) can be beneficial and successful. Teachers can help struggling students develop these complex thinking skills by making metacognition a priority in the classroom through teacher modeling, discussion, and practice (Joseph, 2010). Quality teaching reflects knowledge of the students as a full person, complete with social and emotional complexities, so in addition to the academic and cognitive considerations mentioned, the lessons included in this capstone support the social and emotional needs of middle school students, explored in the next section.

### **Social and Emotional Needs of Middle School Students**

Academics do not occur in a vacuum. Students may be placed in the classroom to learn academics, but they bring with them a complex web of social relationships and emotional concerns, many of which play a role in their classroom experience. For many students, relationship plays a key role in their willingness to work in the classroom, and knowledge of the social and emotional needs of adolescents helps teachers establish that connection.

Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (2000) recognized the elevated status of social and emotional concerns in an adolescent's life, detailing:

The challenge for middle school teachers is really not a question of getting students motivated or not but rather, in part, getting them to be motivated to learn rather than

motivated to protect themselves from situations they perceive as threatening to their self, meaningless, or somehow threatening to their social image. (p. 454)

For this reason, the lessons created for this capstone project considered not only how to make the content academically purposeful and engaging, but also how the content can appeal to the social and emotional needs of middle school students.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2018) defined social and emotional learning as:

. . . the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (para 1)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) recognizes that schools are responsible for embracing and teaching the whole student, not focusing solely on academic content. According to CASEL (2018), schools can, and should, help students gain the important skills and behaviors critical for success as a healthy adult. These types of skills and behaviors might include learning and practicing identifying emotions and emotional responses, impulse control, empathy, self-motivation, and many more (CASEL, 2018). In broad terms, CASEL divided social and emotional learning into five major categories: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision-making.

SEL has been widely supported by the research community. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 SEL programs for ages kindergarten through twelfth grade. Their study revealed that students who were part of

SEL programs exhibited more positive behaviors and attitudes than their peers who were not part of SEL programs. Interestingly, she also found that students in SEL programs made significant academic growth (Durlak et al., 2011).

SEL programs have also been found to be economically beneficial for our society (Belfield, Bowden, Klapp, Levin, Shand, & Zander, 2015). To determine economic benefits Belfield et al. (2015) used benefit-cost analysis to analyze six common social and emotional interventions. The financial benefits of SEL instruction were based on many different factors including the cost of teenage bullying, substance abuse, crime, pregnancy, etc. They found that, for all six interventions, benefits exceeded the cost, sometimes by a considerable amount.

For example, Belfield et al. (2015) analyzed the social emotional intervention called “Positive Action,” which emphasizes “school curriculum/activities to promote positive thinking, actions, and self-concept” (p. 5). They found that the cost of Positive Action was \$53,000 and the benefit was \$130,000, placing the net value of the intervention at \$77,000 (p. 5). These numbers make a strong case for the inclusion of SEL programming in our schools and curriculum.

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) recognized the high need for SEL informed teaching. The NMSA included three major categories in its list of defining characteristics of successful middle schools: curriculum instruction and assessment, leadership and organization, and culture and community (Lounsbury, 2010). This third category, culture and community, focuses on social and emotional learning, with characteristics such as “the school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive and supportive of all,” as well as “every student’s academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate” (Lounsbury, 2010, p. 44). Research supported the idea that social, emotional, and academics are linked, as students who

consider themselves academically competent are likely to be more successful academically and exhibit positive school behaviors; similarly, emotional distress has been found to be a predictor of increased school negative behavior (Roeser et al., 2000).

Wormeli (2014) suggested teaching strategies that recognize a middle school student's developmental needs. Teachers should strive to do the following:

- Incorporate social interaction into any engagement with content
- Switch activities every 10 to 15 minutes to maintain momentum
- Help students recover from bad decisions and failure
- Teach each topic in more than one way
- Show enthusiasm about the subject, even after teaching it for years
- Offer regular opportunities for self-definition (p. 29)

These strategies recommended by Wormeli (2014) incorporate an awareness of both academic and SEL needs. Other strategies for addressing academic and SEL needs recommended by Roeser et al. (2009) included scaffolding skills and activities to increase students' belief in their own capabilities, providing encouragement and emotional support for students when they struggle, and helping students understand the value and relevance of what they are learning in their own lives. Self-regulated strategy development, detailed in the next section, is another SEL-informed strategy found to have success with adolescent students.

### **Self-Regulated Strategy Development**

The primary teaching method used for this capstone project is self-regulatory strategy development, or SRSD. SRSD was first developed in 1982 by Karen Harris, Steve Graham, and their research colleagues and teachers, including Linda Mason and Barbara Friedlander (Harris,

Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008). Harris et al. (2008) initially developed SRSD to serve primarily students with learning disabilities; however, it became apparent that the strategy also showed positive outcomes for struggling writers who did not have learning disabilities.

SRSD differs from many teaching strategies in that it addresses both the academic and social/emotional needs of the struggling writer (Harris et al., 2008). The developers realized that struggling writers had difficulty with the academic task of writing, often producing writing that is “less polished, expansive, coherent, and effective than that of their typically achieving peers” (Harris et al., 2008, p. 4). Equally important, though, Harris et al. (2008) described the self-regulatory difficulties of struggling writers:

They may have difficulty comprehending task demands, producing effective task strategies, and using strategies to mediate performance. They may also experience reciprocal relationships among academic failure, self-doubt, learned helplessness, maladaptive attributions, unrealistic pretask expectations, low self-efficacy, and low motivation. Impulsivity, difficulties with memory or other aspects of information processing, low task engagement and persistence, devaluation of learning, and low productivity are also among the problems with which these students and their teachers must contend. (p. 4)

Self-regulated strategy development sought to address both of these needs by pairing deliberate, explicit academic instruction with components designed to increase the motivation, confidence, and positivity of students who struggle with writing. For example, an SRSD approach might combine the story-writing strategy Who, When, and Where (WWW) with creating self-instructions designed to push students past feelings of academic failure (Harris et al., 2008).

The next section details the essentials of SRSD instruction. These details come from *Powerful Writing Strategies for All Students*, written by Karen Harris, Steve Graham, Linda Mason, and Barbara Friedlander (2008).

SRSD consists of six instructional stages, but teachers and students should adjust the stages to meet their needs. These instructional stages can be used to teach various writing strategies; for example, POW + TREE is a writing strategy intended to help students plan and execute narrative, expository, and persuasive writing. Teachers and students may return to preceding stages at any time; in addition, the stages can be reordered, combined, or modified. Lessons usually consist of 20 to 60 minutes of instructional time, at least three times a week (Harris, et al., 2008).

Along with the instructional stages, Harris et al. (2008) emphasized four self-regulatory skills that teachers should work to develop with their students. These skills include goal setting, self-instructions, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement. Designed to motivate, encourage, and build the self-efficacy of developing writers, the practice of these skills should be imbedded within the six stages of instruction.

**Stage 1: Develop background knowledge.** In stage 1, students learn critical background knowledge and skills for the upcoming writing assignment. If the teacher intends for students to write using a particular strategy, they would learn the essential vocabulary and methodology of that strategy during this stage. During this stage, teachers can work with students to develop self-instructions designed to push students past the type of negative, self-doubting thinking that often leads to failure. For example, Harris et al. (2008) described, “a student who tends to act impulsively might say to himself, ‘Remember, I need to take my time and go slow’” (p. 14). As

part of this instruction, teachers might discuss with students positive and negative self-talk, and begin to discuss with students how this self-talk can either hurt or help them.

**Stage 2: Discuss it.** During the second stage, students and teachers discuss the strategy to be used and the importance of student effort. They discuss the specifics of the writing strategy (including any mnemonics to be used and step by step instructions) and the goals of using the writing strategy. Students should be made to feel like partners or collaborators; the goal of this stage is to begin increasing students' positive association with writing, as well as their motivation. Students might, during this stage, examine some of their past writing. Graphing elements of previous written work may prove useful, so students are able to examine their growth after using the strategy. This analysis should be a positive experience, and teachers should stress that it is okay if students made mistakes, as the purpose of the strategy is to grow as writers. Finally, teacher and students should discuss the purpose of the writing strategy, and when/how students could use this writing strategy in other contexts, assignments, and classes (Harris, et al., 2008).

**Stage 3: Model it.** During this stage, the teacher or a peer should model using the strategy and self-regulatory language while writing an actual essay. Harris et al. (2008) described what this modelling could look like:

- Problem definition (*What is it? What do I have to do here?*)
- Focusing attention and planning (*I need to concentrate. First, I need to...then...*)
- Strategy step statements (*I need to write down my strategy reminder*)
- Self-evaluation and error correcting (*Have I used all my parts? Oops! I missed one. I'd better add it*)



- Coping and self-control (*I can handle this. I need to go slow and take my time*)
- Self-reinforcement (*I like this ending!*) (p. 15)

Teachers can adapt this modelling to suit the specific strengths and weaknesses of their students. They should, though, be sure to model how to successfully cope with difficulty during the writing process. The modelling should feel enthusiastic and natural. Teachers can choose to involve students in the modelling process, if students are able. If a graphic organizer of some type is to be used, the model should also include it. The teacher should also detail the goal of the writing piece, and self-determine if that goal was met.

After the modelling, teacher and students should discuss the importance of self-regulation throughout the writing process. Students can begin coming up with their own self-statements, statements they will use during each stage of the writing process. These self-statements may be strategy reminders and/or self-confidence boosters for when students get stuck or experience some sort of difficulty.

**Stage 4: Memorize it.** During this stage, students are required to memorize any mnemonics and strategy steps that will be used. This memorization should have begun in earlier stages, but the students should be required to memorize these components before moving on. This is important, as students cannot effectively use a strategy that they cannot remember. Students can paraphrase strategy elements as long as the meaning remains the same (Harris, et al., 2008).

**Stage 5: Support it.** During stage 5, teachers scaffold writing instruction according to individual need. Students should use the self-instructions and learned writing strategy to begin composing their written work. Teachers work with students as needed, potentially

collaboratively writing with students who need it. The goal should be working students toward using the writing strategy and self-statements without assistance. This stage typically takes the longest for struggling writers, as they need plenty of support.

Harris et al. (2008) noted that Stage 5 might be considered the most important stage. Without it, research shows that struggling writers show “little or no improvement, even after all four previous stages have been sufficiently completed” (Harris et al., 2008, p. 19). Students must be adequately supported while beginning to write, with support diminishing until students are able to independently adopt the writing strategy on their own.

**Stage 6: Independent performance.** During this final stage, students should be encouraged to begin using self-instruction, or self-talk, in their head, instead of having the instructions written out in front of them. Self-regulation procedures can be continued, but teachers can also pull them back as needed. Teacher and students can discuss plans for using the strategies in the future, and they may also discuss the writing process and whether goals were met (Harris, et al., 2008).

These six stages serve as the instructional basis for SRSD. Teachers can utilize writing strategies, but the idea is to teaching and practice the strategy using the six stages detailed above. The next section will examine research studies that have been completed using SRSD.

### **SRSD Research and Case Studies**

There has been substantial research about the effect of using SRSD to teach writing to students. This research includes two core focuses: first, the use of SRSD as an intervention for students with disabilities; second, the use of SRSD as a general education strategy used with all students.

SRSD was initially developed to be used as an intervention for students with learning disabilities (LD) (Harris, et al., 2008). To get a closer look at the challenges students with learning disabilities face when writing, Graham, Collins, and Rigby-Wills (2017) conducted a meta-analysis that compared the writing of students with LD to their general education peers. They found that on every writing outcome measured, students with LD were less proficient than their peers (Graham et al., 2017). Specifically, their meta-analysis discovered that students with LD earned lower scores than their peers when looking at skills related to writing quality, organization, vocabulary, sentence fluency, conventions of spelling, grammar, and handwriting, genre elements, output, and motivation. In the meta-analysis, the highest discrepancy in skills were in the categories of conventions of spelling, grammar, and handwriting, followed by overall writing quality (Graham et al., 2017).

Another meta-analysis, completed by What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) (2017) looked at nine case studies in which SRSD was used as a writing intervention for students with disabilities. They found that 88% of the single case design experiments included in these studies documented a positive effect, and 0 experiments documented a negative effect. This led WWC (2017) to conclude that SRSD writing intervention has strong evidence of a positive effect.

For a writing teacher, these two meta-analysis studies demonstrate two important conclusions. First, students with disabilities have very real and measurable struggles when it comes to completing a formal writing task. Second, evidence indicates that SRSD, when used as an intervention with those struggling students, has overwhelmingly positive effects. As a teacher who, like many others, has sat through countless professional development opportunities hoping

for some strategy that will truly help these struggling students, it is very exciting to note the success of SRSD.

De La Paz and Graham (as cited in WWC, 2017) completed one of the studies included by WWC. In their study, De La Paz and Graham taught three fifth-grade special education students STOP and DARE writing strategies (as cited in WWC, 2017). The special education students, referred to as Rand, Elayne, and Aviendha, all demonstrated positive writing outcomes as a result of SRSD instruction. For example, the number of “functional essay elements increased by 376% for Rand, 204% for Elayne, and 199% for Aviendha” (De La Paz & Graham, as cited in WWC, 2017, p. 21).

SRSD has also been used to teach writing to students with emotional behavioral disorders (EBD). Losinski, Cuenca- Carlino, Zablocki, and Teagarden (2014) conducted a meta-analysis in which they analyzed twenty of these studies. They found that SRSD interventions consistently had a large, positive effect on the essay elements, essay quality, and word count of writing completed by students with EBD (Losinski et al., 2014). Sreckovic, Common, Knowles, and Lane (2014) had similar findings, noting that SRSD clearly had a positive impact on students with EBD.

In particular, Losinski et al., (2014) noted that the positive impact of SRSD has been demonstrated across elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. This is notable, as research has shown that students with EBD often become increasingly resistant to intervention efforts as they grow older (O'Shaughnessy, Lane, Gresham, & Beebe-Frankenberger, as cited by Sreckovic et al., 2014). Research has also indicated that students with EBD can transfer the skills they gain from SRSD instruction to other assessments; for example, students' scores on the

Woodcock Johnson writing assessment (a test often used in special education evaluations) improved after receiving SRSD intervention (Ennis, Jolivette, Terry, Fredrick, & Alberto, 2015).

Cuenca-Carlino and Mustian (2013) conducted an SRSD study in which they combined persuasive writing and self-determination skills to teach writing to students with EBD. Self-determination was perceived as having the skills and behaviors that lead to success, such as setting reasonable goals and problem-solving (Cuenca-Carlino et al., 2013). According to the authors, many students with EBD have difficulty with these self-determination skills, the lack of which has been linked to higher dropout rates and lower rates of postsecondary education and employment. The intention of the study was to both grow students academically, as well as increase the students' self-advocacy skills.

Cuenca-Carlino et al.'s study (2013) revealed positive results after the SRSD intervention. According to these authors, students' work grew in terms of number of words written, transition words, number of essay parts, and overall quality. In addition to the academic improvement, researchers also noted growth in students' self-regulation skills as a result of this intervention. To measure this, researchers conducted student interviews both pre and post intervention. They found that students' self-determination skill knowledge, self-efficacy, and self-confidence as writers increased as a result of the SRSD intervention. These findings are exciting as they point to both academic and emotional achievement as a result of SRSD. This idea-- that SRSD can both improve students' skills as coherent writers while also giving them the tools to become more confident and independent in their studies-- is critical to the decision to use SRSD to create the lessons in this capstone project.

Due to the academic and behavioral demands of students with EBD, Ennis, Harris, Lane, and Mason (2014) made several suggestions for implementing SRSD with these students. In particular, the researchers suggested that teachers prioritize motivating and discussing relevance with students, as well as capitalizing on and celebrating moments of success and growth. Ennis et al. also highly suggested teaching SRSD instruction within the context of school-wide and individual behavior plans. Favorably, the self-regulatory language employed in SRSD (for example, positive self-talk statements) likely corresponds to language being used in other contexts for students with EBD (for example, in a social skills class); thus one context can serve to reinforce the other (Ennis et al., 2014). While teachers of students with EBD may have special considerations like the ones mentioned above, teachers in this context have noted that they were able to implement the strategy successfully even with the high behavior needs of students (Ennis, Jolivette, Terry, Fredrick, & Alberto, 2015).

SRSD writing instruction has also shown positive effects for students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Taft & Mason, as cited in Mason, Harris, & Graham, 2011). Reid, Trout, and Schartz (2005) conducted a meta-analysis in which they analyzed the use of four self-regulation interventions (self-monitoring, self-monitoring plus reinforcement, self-management, and self-reinforcement). They found that these techniques held positive outcomes for increasing the on-task behavior, academic accuracy, and productivity, as well as decreasing the inappropriate behavior of students with ADHD (Reid et al., 2005). Given the emphasis of self-regulatory skills and language in SRSD writing instruction, its use as a form of writing instruction for students with ADHD is promising.

While SRSD was initially developed intentionally for students with disabilities (Harris et al., 2008), researchers have also seen benefits when SRSD is used to teach students in a general education classroom. For example, De La Paz and Graham (2002) conducted a study to compare the results of SRSD writing instruction with general writing instruction for general education middle school students. All students, in both the control groups and the experimental groups, wrote expository and persuasive essays. Students in the experimental group were taught the PLAN and WRITE strategies using both the SRSD six stage instructional stages and the self-regulatory language (Harris et al., 2008). Students in the control group were taught a variation of lessons that reviewed grammar, essay elements, and sentence structure. De La Paz and Graham (2002) found that in comparison to their peers, students in the experimental group wrote essays that were lengthier, contained more complex vocabulary, and were of better quality. Notably, when given a writing assessment one month after instruction had ended, the students who received SRSD instruction continued to outperform their peers.

The implementation of SRSD as an intervention at Mountain View Elementary School had similar success (Johnson, Hancock, Carter, & Pool, 2012). Mountain View began by utilizing SRSD as a Tier 2 intervention, targeting specific students who were far below proficient. They were so impressed with the positive results of the intervention that they decided to expand the instruction in the following years to include Tier 1 students, or the entire grade level of students. Thus, again, SRSD instruction was expanded from its original context in the special education classroom to being used in the general education classroom.

## **Summary**

To address the research question- *How can I use self-regulated strategy development to teach expository writing to middle school students*, this literature review considered the impact of writing in our society, the academic, social, and emotional concerns of middle school students, and the research that has been completed regarding SRSD in different contexts.

Being able to write well is a skill that will help students in many ways. Notably, Conley (2007) confirmed its place in the college classroom, with students using their writing skills in the majority of college classes. Without question, many students are arriving at college without the skills they need to succeed based on standardized test scores (NAEP, 2012), as well as the large number of students taking remedial classes (Schak, 2017). This makes this capstone project all the more relevant, as, the more we can do to grow our students' skills in middle and high school, the better we serve them for the future.

Knowing that this capstone project ideally will be used in a middle school setting, the research delved into the academic, emotional, and social needs of the average middle school student, as well as teaching strategies that understand and appreciate the uniqueness of adolescents. Robinson's (2017) research into the adolescent brain pointed to learning opportunities that encourage interdisciplinary teaching, controversial topics, healthy competition, social engagement, service learning, and metacognitive thinking. Additionally, research showed the benefits for students of schools that embrace social and emotional learning (SEL) as part of their curriculum (Durlak et al., 2011).

Self-regulated strategy development (Harris et al., 2008) is a unique form of writing instruction that combines six instructional stages with the employment of self-regulatory language. Many case studies have shown the positive effects of SRSD, particularly when used as



an intervention for students with disabilities (What Works Clearinghouse, 2017). Research has also shown, though, that SRSD has promising effects when used with all students, those with and without disabilities (De La Paz & Graham, 2002).

For teachers of middle school students, the emphasis on the *combination* of academics and emotional support for students is promising based on the demands of the adolescent life stage. Middle school students are needy and emotional; they oscillate between the highs and lows of life, dramatically, in what often feels like seconds. They thrive on relationship, encouragement, and recognition as individuals. SRSD recognizes and meets these demands.

This review of the research literature creates a strong case that SRSD has the potential to help students, particularly struggling students, as it gives them both the academic tools to be successful with writing, as well as the metacognitive support to see that they are capable of success with writing. For students used to failure, seeing themselves as capable of success is sometimes half the battle. For this reason, SRSD was used to create a series of writing lessons with the intention of using these lessons in a 7th grade classroom. The next chapter outlines the context and rationale for this capstone project.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Using Self-Regulated Strategy Development to Create Middle School Writing Lessons

#### Project Overview

Over the last three years teaching 7th grade English, I have noticed several trends. First, as the district and school has focused on reading, time dedicated to writing instruction has decreased. Second, my struggling students, in particular, my students with disabilities, seem to exhibit more difficulty and anxiety with completing a formal writing task than many other classroom tasks and activities.

In the literature review, my goal was to better understand strategies that can help struggling students with the writing process, and to answer the question: *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?* For my capstone project, I developed a series of lessons that combined the instructional stages of self-regulated strategy development (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008) with the development and practice of self-regulatory skills meant to motivate and encourage my middle school students.

The literature review highlighted the importance of writing in collegiate level courses (Conley, 2007), as well as the distressingly downward trend of writing skills based on standardized test scores (NAEP, 2012). This made my capstone project all the more relevant, as it sought to help middle school students set the groundwork for becoming successful, collegiate level writers. Using SRSD (Harris et al., 2008) to teach writing skills has been shown to have positive outcomes for students both with and without disabilities (What Works Clearinghouse,

2017; De La Paz & Graham, 2002). Therefore, my project sought to use SRSD to inform the way that I teach writing to my 7th grade middle school students.

As teachers, we have a lot of responsibility placed on our shoulders. Each year, we are given classes filled with students of differing abilities, and the expectation is that we teach in a way to ensure growth from each and every one of our students by the end of the year. As every teacher knows, though, these students are not their standardized test scores. They come into our classrooms with a host of social and emotional concerns each day-- many of them wholly consumed by the drama that just unfolded at lunch, and some of them unsure when and what their next meal might consist of.

They also bring with them the academic patterns they have grown used to--some with the positive associations we try to encourage--trying, learning, growing--some with negative associations, weariness with the cycle of failure and disillusionment leading to refusal, defiance. In my experience, many students with these negative associations are my students receiving special education services. SRSD has shown success with these struggling students by teaching writing instruction paired with self-regulatory language, designed to give those struggling students new models of self-talk and encouragement. Research suggested SRSD also helps grow students who exhibit grade-level writing tendencies. For this reason, I am excited to use SRSD in my classroom to teach writing.

This chapter includes my project's setting and target audience, in order to give the reader a better sense as to where and why the project will be implemented. Chapter Three also includes a detailed description of my project, as well as the curriculum and research framework. This allows the reader to understand the thought behind the structure and format of my project.

## Setting for the Capstone Project

I teach in a public school district that consists of seventeen elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools, and one alternative learning center. There are more than 80 languages spoken throughout the school district, and approximately 17.9% of our students receive Special Education services. Since 2015, three years, I have worked as a 7th grade English teacher in this school district, at a middle school that teaches students in grades 6, 7, and 8.

At my particular school, we serve about 800 middle school students. The school is approximately 64% White, 15% Hispanic, 12% Black, and 7% Asian, with about 42% of our students receiving free and reduced lunch. Since my capstone project sought to improve instruction, it may be useful to know that academic profile of the school. Each year, my students take the Comprehensive Assessment required by the state. These tests measure reading and math achievement. In the 2017-2018 school year, 49% of 7th grade students at my school met proficiency or exceeded on the reading portion of the test; 43% of our 7th grade students met proficiency or exceeded on the math.

My classes typically consist of 28-34 students, and they are a mix of gifted, general education, and special education students. I typically teach one honors English class (primarily gifted students), three regular English classes (mix of general education, special education, and gifted students), and two Extended English courses (a remedial reading course for non-special education, non-English learner students who test below grade level on standardized assessments).

I intend to use my project in my three sections of regular English. Extended English is a supplementary class, meaning that Extended English students also are enrolled in a regular

English class. Therefore, if needed, I could also use SRSD with my Extended English students if they required more support. This past year, in total, I had twenty-four special education students in my classroom, including students with general learning disabilities (LD), emotional behavioral disorder (EBD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). My classes are forty-six minutes long.

### **Target Audience**

My target audience for this capstone project was my professional learning community, or PLC, which consists of the two other English teachers at my school who also teach 7th grade English. The purpose of a PLC is to investigate and analyze data to make our teaching practices stronger, so my PLC is the ideal place to implement and analyze the results of using this strategy. Provided we see success implementing the strategy in our English classes (for example, noting that our students exhibit less reluctance to tackle a writing task), my target audience might expand to include teachers of other subject matters, who could help develop and use the self-regulatory skills in their own classes as well. In particular, social studies teachers might also benefit from using SRSD in their classes, given the amount of writing their students tend to complete.

### **Project Description**

For my capstone project, I created a series of lesson plans designed to teach expository essay writing to middle school students. These lessons utilized the SRSD six stage instructional framework, as well as the incorporation of SRSD self-regulation techniques (Harris et al., 2008). The lessons were also informed by what I have learned, through my review of current literature, about the academic, social, and emotional developmental needs of adolescents.

All lessons work toward the Common Core State Standard 7.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content (The NGA Center/CCSSO, 2010). The end goal of these lessons was to scaffold students toward the creation of a five paragraph expository essay.

In my school community and the larger English teacher community, there has been a lot of debate about the effectiveness of the five paragraph essay. Opponents of the five paragraph essay believe that it creates a mold that students are reluctant to break free from-- writing the standard five paragraph essay far into high school and even college, when divergent writing styles and forms are encouraged (Hill Campbell, 2014). Supporters of the five paragraph essay argue that it teaches students a clear structure for organizing their writing, and these organizational skills are necessary regardless of writing type (Smith, 2006). Currently, the English teachers at my school have agreed to continue teaching the five paragraph essay, citing those organizational and structural reasons.

Most readers will likely be familiar with the five paragraph essay. The five paragraph essay begins with an introduction paragraph, in which students seek to capture the reader's attention and give them a slight hint at what is to come. This first sentence is often called a hook. The last sentence of the introduction paragraph is referred to as the thesis statement, the core of the essay, in which the student explicitly informs readers of the three points to follow in the body paragraphs. The three points should be presented in the order in which they will be explained in the body paragraphs.

The three body paragraphs follow the introduction paragraph. Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence. In 7th grade, we ask that students incorporate at least three reasons that support or prove the topic sentence into each body paragraph, along with *commentary* explaining each reason. In the SRSD language of my lesson plans, readers will notice that this commentary is called the *explanation*, in which the writer further explains and gives details about each reason in the body paragraphs. Each body paragraph, then, ends with some sort of closure statement.

Finally, the last paragraph of the five paragraph essay is the resolution. The resolution begins with a summary statement. This summary statement restates the three points presented in the thesis, in the same order that they appear in the essay, but using slightly different language than the thesis statement. The summary statement and the thesis statement should not be the same sentence. The essay then ends with a clincher statement, in which the writer provides the reader with one final thought.

In my district, students arrive at middle school having already written, in elementary school, a rudimentary version of the five paragraph essay. Sixth grade teachers review this format, and emphasize the necessity of both the thesis statement and supporting evidence in body paragraphs. In 7th grade, we review this structure once more, and we emphasize building effective supporting evidence and adding commentary. In 8th grade, students will write even longer body paragraphs, and students will begin incorporating textual evidence in the form of direct quotes.

These lessons will be presented directly following a unit that focuses on grammar and writing mechanics. At my school, grammar instruction has been divided based on grade level. In

sixth grade, students review the components of a sentence and learn simple sentence basics. In seventh grade, students review simple sentences and learn how to write compound sentences. In eighth grade, students review simple and compound sentences, and then learn how to write complex sentences. Therefore, my assessment for the five paragraph essay will contain a grammar mechanics component.

The lesson sequence begins after one day of review, during which I review the basic components of the five paragraph essay that students should remember from 6th grade and earlier. This includes stressing the necessity of a clear thesis statement, one that presents the three points to follow in the order in which they will appear in the essay. In addition, we review the basic components of each body paragraph, and I explain that in 7th grade, we focus on providing additional support for each reason included in the body paragraphs.

For this lesson series, students will write a five paragraph essay that answers the prompt *Tell me three things people might not know about you*. I chose this topic for a few reasons. First, every student should have material to answer this prompt; after all, it is about them. It gives students vast choice in terms of what they wish to write about, from sports to food to past experiences. My hope is that students will be passionate about potential topics-- for example, a student that loves hockey can write at least one paragraph about hockey, and hopefully he will have plenty to say about something he loves.

This prompt appeals to the developmental needs of middle school students. As stated in Chapter Two, Robinson (2017) found that adolescents are motivated most by social activities, and this certainly matches what I have seen in my classroom. I see evidence of the social nature of middle schoolers everywhere in my classroom, from their absolute joy when allowed to pick



their own partners, to the number of times I have comforted a student in tears after lunch because of the “drama” (countless). Based on my experience as a teacher, an intrinsic part of this adolescent social motivation is an active desire to be seen, heard, and understood by peers. Adults, too, have this desire, but I believe it is quelled, somewhat, by the maturity and self-confidence that comes with age. Adolescents are insecure, needy, and seeking approval from their peers almost constantly, and this prompt gives them a forum for expressing themselves to and being further understood by their peers.

There are risks to this prompt. My years as a teacher have shown me that teens can sometimes be unbearably mean to one another, and in an atmosphere where peer approval is valued so highly, the impact of this animosity is often devastating. There is a chance that a student could be hurt emotionally by a peer reading and reacting negatively to something she has revealed about herself in her essay. This is a real risk, as I do intend to have students participate in peer revisions, following this lesson sequence. To combat that risk, first and foremost, I will tell students before they begin writing that they will be sharing with at least two other students. They likely will tailor their topics accordingly. I will encourage them to stay true to themselves, but avoid writing about anything too revealing, knowing their peers are going to be reading their work.

I also believe my classroom atmosphere will help make this prompt one which students feel comfortable addressing. One of my strongest values as an educator is in creating a safe space for my students, where students can make mistakes and be themselves freely, without fear of repercussions. At the beginning of the year, my introductory lessons stress the impact of bullying and negativity, and I insist that it will be not tolerated in my classroom. I always tell my students

that I will treat them with compassion and kindness, and the expectation is that this treatment will be reciprocated toward me and demonstrated toward one another.

Certainly, I am not always successful; there have been students over the years who struggle with these expectations. As I have gained more experience as an educator, though, I have seen more success than failure at being able to create this community feel in my classes, and I expect that this will help me with a writing prompt like this one. Additionally, the vulnerability students might experience in writing these essays may lead to acceptance and connection, which would help strengthen that community atmosphere.

Table 1 (Appendix A) details the scope and sequence of my lesson plans. The scope and sequence highlights the objectives of each lesson and the SRSD stage of instruction. Full lesson plans, along with supplementary materials, can be found in the Appendix.

### **Curriculum Framework**

My lessons were based, in part, on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a framework that seeks to “improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how people learn” (CAST, 2018, para 1). The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), a nonprofit education research development organization, has played a large part in taking the concepts of universal design, first implemented in the field of architecture, and adopting them into the field of education.

In the field of education, UDL has been considered inclusive of students with disabilities, as it highlights the many different pathways toward success that a variety of learners might take in one classroom (Rao, Smith, & Lowrey, 2017). CAST (2018) described three essential guidelines for ensuring all students can participate successfully in learning opportunities: provide

multiple means of engagement, provide multiple means of representation, and provide multiple means of action and expression. These three guidelines are then further broken down into more concrete suggestions for educators. My lessons prioritize the UDL concept of providing multiple means of engagement, otherwise known as establishing the “why of learning” (CAST, 2018).

In particular, my lessons emphasize the UDL concepts of creating relevance for students by allowing student choice and individual self-expression, varying levels of challenge and support based on student need, establishing and discussing goals, fostering collaboration and communication, developing and discussing self-coping skills and strategies, and offering opportunities for self-assessment and reflection (CAST, 2018). While I developed my lessons with my struggling students in mind, the lessons are meant to be used as whole group instruction, with varying levels of scaffolded support and challenge based on individual need.

Critical also to my design framework was self-regulated strategy development, described in *Powerful Writing Strategies for All Students* by Harris, Graham, Mason, and Friedlander (2008). I based my lessons on the six stages of instruction described by Harris et al. in their book, and discussed in detail in Chapter Two of this capstone project: Develop Background Knowledge, Discuss It, Model It, Memorize It, Support It, and Independent Performance. In addition to their instructional framework, I also emphasized the development of self-regulation skills and strategies in my lessons, a key concept of Harris et al.’s (2008) description of SRSD.

### **Assessment**

I will assess the success of my project in two different ways. First, student essays will be assessed via a rubric (Appendix C). This rubric seeks primarily to identify which students have

successfully included the various parts of the five paragraph essay in their work. A complete essay should contain a hook, a correctly written thesis statement, three body paragraphs (each consisting of a topic sentence and reasons and commentary that support the topic sentence), a summary statement, and a clincher statement. As a teacher, I will reflect on my own practice and look back at preceding years, seeking to compare the success of this strategy with ways that I have taught the five paragraph essay to former students. The assessment rubric will also include two statements that will not detract from the student's grade. These two statements are as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ Student used strategies POW + TREE while writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Student used self-statements and coping skills when/if frustrated

I will use these two statements as a self-reflection, to see whether students seem to find the strategies taught to them beneficial, as demonstrated by their use of them while writing.

The project's effectiveness will also be assessed via a Writing Skills Survey (Appendix D). This survey asks students to rate their confidence with different aspects of the writing task. Students will take this survey prior to the first lesson in this lesson sequence, and they will take the survey again after the lesson sequence has ended. I will compare the results looking at individual students.

To assess their confidence with the content and structure of the five paragraph essays, students are asked to rate their confidence with the following statements:

- I can brainstorm usable ideas for a 5 paragraph essay.
- I can write a clear thesis statement that gives my reader a preview of the ideas to follow.

- I can write a thorough body paragraph that contains support and details for the main point.

Because a focus of this project was the discussion and practice of self-regulation strategies, I also want to assess the effectiveness of that work. The following statements, which students will also rate with regard to their personal feelings of confidence, address this focus:

- I know strategies for coping when I am frustrated with a writing task.
- I can work through frustration and be successful with my writing.

Success will also be measured, albeit less formally, throughout the year, as my students tackle different writing assignments. We will return to this structure and practice throughout the year, and I will look for whether or not students are beginning to transfer, on their own, the self-regulation skills to other assignments.

### **Timeline**

This capstone project began in the summer of 2018. Drafts of Chapter One, Chapter Two, and Chapter Three were completed during the summer of 2018. Chapters One, Two, and Three were revised in the fall of 2018. The lessons were written following a review of the literature on the impact of writing in today's society, the academic, social, and emotional developmental needs of adolescents, and case studies that used self-regulated strategy development. Chapter Four, a reflection on the lesson writing process and capstone experience, was written in the fall of 2018. The project was submitted for assessment in early December, 2018.

### **Summary**

Thus far, in this capstone project, Chapter One introduced the project and described the professional and personal journey that led me to this point in my career. Chapter Two reviewed

relevant literature, focusing on the topics of writing relevance in today's society, academic, social, and emotional developmental needs of adolescents, and case studies of researchers who have used SRSD as a teaching strategy for students with and without disabilities. Chapter Three outlined the setting, audience, curriculum framework, research methods, and a more detailed project description. In the final chapter of my capstone project, I reflect on the capstone project process itself.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Reflection

#### Introduction

As an educator, I want my students to be well-equipped for success in their futures. For both the pursuit of higher education and most employment opportunities, the ability to write formally and coherently is a necessity. My experience as a teacher has shown me that some students really struggle with tackling a writing task. Academically, students often struggle with maintaining organization and structure in a writing piece. Behaviorally, many of these same students struggle with maintaining the focus and attention necessary to see a writing piece to its fruition. This led me to my research question: *How can the teaching of self-regulated skills be integrated into lessons focused on developing the expository writing of middle school students?* This question led to my development of a series of expository writing lessons I intend to use in my classroom. This last chapter summarizes key findings from my literature review, reflect on the curriculum process itself, and discuss limitations and future intentions for my project.

#### Key Understandings from Literature Review

Conducting my literature review was a very informative process. While all of my sources led me to my project creation, a few sources proved especially critical. Conley's (2007) discussion of the prevalence and importance of writing for the college student helped me understand the relevance of including quality writing instruction in our middle and high school classrooms. This finding--that writing is a high leverage skill for students--is distressing considering the writing achievement demonstrated by standardized tests, such as the ones

provided by National Assessment for Educational Progress (2008, 2012). Unfortunately, these tests suggest that the majority of students in the United States are not proficient in the skills necessary for quality writing, reporting particularly low numbers of proficiency for students with disabilities (NAEP, 2008).

Robinson's research (2017) into the adolescent brain also contributed to my curriculum development. In particular, her finding that metacognitive thinking is a marker of quality adolescent education helped point me in the direction of self-regulated strategy development, which allows students to practice these metacognitive skills. Robinson (2017) also found that these metacognitive skills can be improved with practice, suggesting that the inclusion of self-regulation practices would be a worthwhile addition to curriculum.

The conclusions drawn from Durlak's (2011) meta-analysis of social emotional learning (SEL) programs also was informative. Stemming from my own personal experience as a classroom teacher, I believed going into this project that academic, social, and emotional concerns are very intertwined for middle school students, and that a successful teacher recognizes and utilizes this understanding. Durlak's (2011) discovery of the benefits of SEL informed schools and instruction confirmed this belief, and led me to believe that a quality curricular approach would combine academics with recognition of the social and emotional needs of middle school students.

Finally, I gained essential understandings for the creation of my project through researching self-regulated strategy development-- what it is, how to implement it, and how teachers and researchers have used it in the past. In particular, Harris et al.'s (2008) book *Powerful Writing Strategies for All Students* helped me understand the stages of development to



SRSD, as well as how to incorporate self-regulatory language and practice throughout instruction. The meta-analysis conducted by What Works Clearinghouse (2017) showed me the benefits of using SRSD as an intervention for students with disabilities. De La Paz and Graham's (2002) use of SRSD in the general education classroom encouraged me to use this strategy as a form of whole group instruction.

### **Project Review**

For my project, I created a series of lessons that used self-regulated strategy development to teach expository writing to middle school students. Throughout these lessons, students moved through the six stages of SRSD instruction. Students also created and practiced using self-regulatory phrases when they experienced frustration completing the writing task. The POW + TREE writing strategies (Harris et al., 2008) are taught to students as a means for brainstorming ideas and remembering the components of an essay. At the end of these lessons, students are asked to write a five paragraph essay responding to the following prompt: Tell me three things people might not know about you. After the lesson sequence, students went on to complete self and peer essay reviews. The effectiveness of my project is assessed through both an assessment rubric, aimed at determining students' inclusion of critical parts of the five paragraph essay, and a writing skills survey, meant to determine the success of the strategy's attempt to increase student confidence with regard to their writing. Students reviewed and practiced using the strategies at different times throughout the school year, when asked to complete various writing tasks.

### **Project Limitations**

Part of this project's success is dependent on student buy-in. While the use of self-regulatory language and skills seems beneficial, as it targets behavioral areas in which many students struggle, I predict that some students might not see the relevance of this type of thinking. Middle school students are very sensitive to being "talked down to," and I fear that for some students, these phrases and skills might seem more elementary than they prefer. Because of these potential concerns, there might be some push back against the strategies. It will fall to the teacher, then, to know the students enough to present the lessons and skills to achieve maximum buy-in from students.

In my classroom, this has meant a few different considerations. First, I intend to teach the concept of self-regulation in language I think my students will both understand and connect with. "Frustration" is going to be a key word for me during these lessons, as I think it clearly expresses what many students would verbalize as their feelings during the writing process. For instance, when modeling, I might say, "When I am staring at the blank page in front of me and I feel frustrated, I need to remember to take a breath and think about things I have a lot to say about." My modelling of self-regulatory language needs to feel authentic, practical, and meaningful. This modeling can be shaped by the real struggles my students have in my classroom. For instance, I see many students struggle with how to begin writing that first sentence. If my modeling stems from these real problems, it is more likely to feel authentic to students.

Second, my success with these lessons, as with most things in the classroom, will depend partially on my relationship with each student. If students trust that I will lead them in the right direction, they will be more likely to follow my lead, even when the language and practice of

these skills might seem awkward and uncomfortable. I will continue to stress the normalcy of anxiety relating to writing, and how this anxiety can be overcome with the use of these strategies.

### **Project Implications**

The natural audience for my project is my English PLC, consisting of the two other teachers at my school who teach 7th grade English. I will share my project with these members of my PLC through both the distribution of my lessons in the form of a binder, as well as a presentation describing the creation and focus of the project.

Based on the outcomes of this project, one implication of the project may be the inclusion of self-regulation strategies, talk, and ideas throughout much more of my curriculum. At my school, self-regulation strategies are frequently included in curriculum for special education students who have emotional or behavioral needs. For example, many students may receive this type of instruction in a Social Skills class taught by a special education teacher. I do not think, though, that students always understand that these strategies and skills can be used in a general education, academic context. For example, they may learn to take a deep breath and count to ten when they are experiencing drama or anger with a peer. They might not know, though, that the frustration they experience when they face a writing task could be helped using similar strategies. By incorporating self-regulation strategies into my academic instruction, I would be providing support for the instruction given by these special education teachers, and I would also be helping students understand ways they can work through frustration they experience in the classroom.

Above all else, this project and the research leading to its development has convinced me of the need to incorporate and consider academic, social, and emotional needs as an integral part

of designing successful curriculum for adolescents. This finding supports my experience as a teacher. Middle school students are not usually capable of leaving their social and emotional concerns outside the classroom door, and this frequently becomes evident from behaviors exhibited in the classroom. I firmly believe that a successful middle school teacher finds ways to support adolescent social and emotional development in her lessons, and I think that self-regulation strategies are one way to do so.

### **Summary**

For my capstone project, I created a series of lessons designed to incorporate self-regulation strategies into the teaching of expository writing to middle school students. Chapter One outlined my history and the initial thought behind the project. Chapter Two detailed the results of many researchers whose studies contributed to the development of the project. Chapter Three described the project more in detail. Finally, Chapter Four offered a reflection after the project's completion. This project has given me the time and space to consider the many factors that contribute to a student's success in my classroom. In particular, the project has given me a new set of tools to use to help my students, especially my struggling students, see success with their writing. The project has also given me a new appreciation for the complexity of tasks involved with the writing process, particularly for students who struggle with self-regulation, an appreciation that I think will ultimately allow me to be a more effective and empathetic educator.

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## Appendix A

## Scope and Sequence of Lesson Plans

Table 1		
<i>Scope and Sequence of Lesson Plans</i>		
<b><u>Lesson</u></b>	<b><u>Objectives</u></b> SWBAT = Students will be able to...	<b><u>SRSD Phase</u></b>
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Discuss their own relationship with writing</li> <li>*Discuss the relevance of writing skills in today's world</li> <li>*Begin learning the writing strategies POW + TREE</li> </ul>	Developing Background Knowledge
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Begin memorizing POW+ TRE</li> <li>*Analyze several expository essays looking for parts</li> </ul>	Developing Background Knowledge
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Understand and discuss the essay prompt</li> <li>*Analyze example writing based on essay prompt</li> </ul>	Discuss It
Day 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Review and memorize POW + TREE</li> <li>*Observe, analyze, and discuss teacher modelling of the strategy</li> <li>*Begin coming up with their own self-reinforcements.</li> </ul>	Model It / Memorize It
Day 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Brainstorm ideas for their own essays</li> <li>*Practice using their individual self-reinforcements</li> <li>*Complete a graphic organizer based on their own ideas and the POW + TREE strategy</li> </ul>	Support It
Day 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Observe, analyze, and discuss teacher modelling of using the graphic organizer to begin writing</li> <li>*Begin writing their essays using their self-reinforcements and graphic organizers, utilizing teacher support as needed</li> </ul>	Support It
Day 7 & moving forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Practice and review skills with a variety of writing assignments throughout the year</li> <li>*Decrease scaffolding and support as needed</li> </ul>	Independent Performance

## Appendix B

## Lesson Plans and Supporting Documents

**Lesson: Day 1**

**Standard 7.7.2.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information

Objectives	SRSD Phase
*SWBAT discuss their own relationships with writing. *SWBAT discuss the relevance of being able to write well. *SWBAT begin to learn the strategies POW + TREE.	Developing Background Knowledge

**Materials:**

- Digital class copy of sections of *Coming into Language* by Jimmy Santiago Baca (1991) (to be projected on a SmartBoard or similar device for class viewing)
- Student copies of POW + TREE Handout for distribution

**Procedures:**

1. Begin by asking students to discuss with their partners (Think-Pair-Share) the following two questions:
  - Why it is important to learn how to write well? In other words, where and when will you use writing skills in your life?
  - How do you feel about writing? Confident? Worried? Excited? Anxious?
2. After each question, encourage volunteers to share with the class. Make a list on the board of reasons students should learn how to write well. Be sure the list includes high school, college, applications, resumes, emails, etc.
3. Share sections of Jimmy Santiago Baca's (1991) *Coming into Language* essay with the class.
  - Highlight Baca's life story, and how he credits language with giving him power and voice in a way he never felt before.
  - Discuss ways that students too have more power and voice because of their ability to read and write (Ex: writing to the principal to change a school policy, writing to

a legislator to protest an unfair law, understanding the news and what's going on in the world, etc.)

4. Give each student a POW + TREE Mnemonic Chart for their binders.
  - Explain each part of the mnemonic. Explain that the TREE Mnemonic is meant to help students remember all of the parts that go into a quality body paragraph.
  - The end goal is that students will write a 5 paragraph essay, including 3 of these body paragraphs. The other two paragraphs will be an introduction and a conclusion.
  
5. Have students work with their partners to practice with the mnemonics:
  - POW: Have students practice coming up with ideas to answer the following prompts. Ask students to aim for three ideas per prompt. They can share orally with their partners:
    - Describe a family celebration that has special meaning for you. (For example, Christmas is special to my family because 1) We cook a specific meal, 2) I see relatives I do not normally see, and 3) I get to open presents.)
    - Describe a sport you like and why you like it.
    - Explain how different modern life would be without computers. (Prompts from Learning Express Writing Team, 2003).
  - Students can spend remaining class time working with their partner to begin memorizing the parts of POW + TREE and what the acronyms stand for. They will need to have these mnemonics memorized later in the week.


## POW + TREE Mnemonic Chart

**POW**

**P**ick my idea.

**O**rganize my notes.

**W**rite and say more.

**TREE**

**T**opic Sentence

**R**easons  
(3 or more)

**E**xplain Reasons

**E**nding

Tell what you believe! Why do I believe this?

Will my readers believe this?

Say more about each reason.

Wrap it up right!

## Lesson: Day 2

**Standard 7.7.2.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information

Objectives	SRSD Phase
*SWBAT continue discussing & work toward memorizing the writing strategies POW + TREE. *SWBAT analyze several expository essays looking for parts.	Developing Background Knowledge

### Materials:

- Extra copies of POW + TREE Handout, for absent students or students who lost their copy.
- Copies of Example 1, Example 2, Example 3, and Example 4 for each student (on paper or digitally)
- Digital copies of all 4 Examples to be projected on SmartBoard

### Procedures:

1. Students complete a Think-Pair Share:
  - What do the mnemonics POW + TREE stand for?
  - When do we use these mnemonics?

Work as class until the students have successfully pieced together the meaning. Have students then get out their POW + TREE Handout.

2. Explain that, today, students will be looking at example essays and determining whether or not all essay parts are included.
  - **Class Example:** Project Example 1 on the SmartBoard. Read the example aloud. Students should also have the example in front of them.
    - Identify the thesis statement (from previous review lesson). Identify the topic sentence, reasons, explanations, and ending sentence (TREE) for each body paragraph. Be sure to note the conclusion paragraph, even though they are not working with that one.
    - Have students highlight or mark the text to distinguish the parts from each other. Determine whether all necessary parts are in the essay.
    - Ask students where or how the author could have made the essay stronger.
  - **Partner Example:** Students should work to identify and mark the thesis statement, as well as the topic sentence, reasons, explanations, and ending sentence for each body paragraph in Example 2.
  - **Partner Example:** Do the same with Example 3

- **Individual Example:** Time permitting, have students analyze and mark-up Example 4 individually.

NOTE: Following each partner or individual analysis, have a class discussion and demonstration to be sure students are correctly identifying the parts.

3. Any extra time can be used to review the POW + TREE mnemonic. Explain that students will need to have this mnemonic memorized in two days.



### Example 1

Imagine walking into a classroom full of four year olds. You see a mountain of glitter on the floor, more glitter flying at your face like you're in a sparkly snowstorm, and the little boy in the blue shirt is eating it like fun dip! You may be wondering, "When would that ever happen?" Unfortunately, that happened to me just last Sunday. Three things people might not know about me are I teach kids how to read and write Hebrew, I was born in Hungary, and I love playing volleyball.

First, I volunteer at Sunday school and teach four and five-year-olds how to read and write Hebrew. I can't say that I haven't walked in and seen them eating the glitter that was meant for our macaroni art project, but I can say it's a lot of fun. The more I hang out with kindergarteners, the more I realize how boring teenagers are. I also tutor them individually, that way I can focus on each kid and make sure the glitter stays away. I volunteer for about three hours on Sundays, and it's often the best time of my week.

Next, I was born in the small country of Hungary. Both my parents were born in Hungary too. I can also speak partial Hungarian( like basic sentences). Mostly my entire family lives in Hungary so it's very helpful to be able to speak Hungarian. Reading is a bit more of a struggle as it's hard to constantly switch between English and Hungarian. I'm glad to have this experience, since it's cool to be able to understand a different language.

Finally, I love playing volleyball. Volleyball is a very fun sport to play; watching it is boring, but playing volleyball is fun. The rush of hitting the ball over the net is amazing; it makes you have more confidence. It is also a fairly easy sport to learn how to play. Learning the basics(sets and bumps) is not that difficult or hard to do once you get the hang of it.

In summary, I have shared that I teach kids how to read and write Hebrew, I was born in Hungary, and I love playing volleyball. I wouldn't trade these three things for anything in the world. I'm glad that my classmates will now know a little bit more about me!

## Example 2

Have you ever had to go or move to a place you did not want to go? Well that happened to me a few years back. I came home and saw my family's clothes packed. At that moment I knew I was moving.

First, people don't know that I've lived in Chicago, IL. I lived there for about one in a half years but I go there a lot currently and before I moved. My favorite color back then was green. Moving was a huge change. The people were a bit different but school was really different. My school called South Loop was behind in teaching. When I got here, I had a hard time keeping up. I think I'm getting the hang of it now though.

In addition, I am a huge pet lover. I have had a total of 9 pets in my life. I have had 2 fish that died of age, 1 bird that flew away, 1 bunny that also died of age, 4 baby bunnies that couldn't survive without their mother, and now we have a cat. It took me years to convince my mom to get me a cat and finally she got fed up of my complains and got me one. My brother (who is 21 years old) moved out for 2 years and he has 3 cats and a lizard; I think this is totally unfair!

Finally, I love the sport of basketball. Being able to run up and down the court dribbling, shooting, and passing to my friends is a lot of fun. The pressure of trying to make quick decisions is nerve-wracking and exciting at the same time. I also love traveling to different cities with my team; it is always so exciting when we get to do other activities outside of basketball together. Basketball is definitely my favorite sport.

Three things people may not know about me is that I've lived in Chicago, I am a huge pet lover, and I love playing basketball. THE END!!!

### Example 3

Do you like going outside? I don't. Three things people might not know about me are that I am a Marvel fan, my life goals, and that I don't really like being outside.

First something not many people may know are some of my life goals and why. The first one would probably have to be to stop thinking so negative, because I think it'll make a big difference. Another life goal would be to stop being so insecure about myself. This would most likely be the hardest one for maybe reasons. I think too much about it and what other people think other than would I think. I would really like this to happen so I can feel better about myself and not so stressed all the time.

Also, I am a Marvel fan! I have to admit, I am a nerd! Especially when it comes to Marvel or superheros. My dad grew up being a nerd, so I guess I take it from him. I am pretty sure I even like Marvel more than my two little brothers, and they like Marvel a lot! The way I got into Marvel was when we watched "Guardians of the Galaxy" as a family. After I saw that, I told my dad that I want to see all the new Marvel movies with him. Recently, I saw "Thor Ragnarok" with my family, and it was AWESOME!!! I love Marvel!

Finally, people might not know that I don't really like going outside. I'm more of an indoor person than an outdoor person. When my brother and I go outside, my brother always wants to play catch. But whenever I have to throw the ball, I would hit my brother in the face or someplace random on his body. I really don't like to play sports. I prefer staying inside just listening to music or playing computer games.

In summary, I have life goals, I am a Marvel fan, and I don't like going outside. I might change more as I get older, but I think these things will stay the same. When we get to know each other a little bit better, everyone's lives might improve.

#### Example 4

“Don’t judge a book by the chapter you walked in on.” People don’t know much about me especially these three things. If you didn’t know, I like writing, I have lots of hobbies, and Christmas is my favorite holiday.

First, I absolutely enjoy writing, yes I love writing. I can write for hours even though my hand gets tired and I run out of ideas on what to write. Writing helps with my feelings. I have a writing journal where I just write whatever I feel. Even though my hand tends to hurt writing is a way to express myself. This will sound dumb but writing makes me feel safe. My thoughts and I alone.

Second, some of my hobbies. One of my hobbies is mountain biking. One time I did a 25 mile race with my dad and I thought it was going to be easy! Boy was I wrong. I wanted to puke halfway through, but with some encouragement I powered through and also managed to place 33 place out of 100 people! I thought that was pretty cool. Another one of my hobbies is painting, just after finishing one of my biggest paintings yet I reach out to stretch and “bump” and I watch as the white paint flows all over the painting because I had forgotten to close it. I had to paint most of it again, goes to show that you shouldn't celebrate too quick!

Last, but not least, Christmas is my favorite holiday. Christmas is my favorite holiday because you get a bunch of presents. Last year I got a TV for christmas. Most of the times we’ve celebrated christmas is when we have family get togethers at multiple house if not then one. Last year we went to are grandpa & grandma's for a family get together.

In conclusion, I love to write, I have lots of hobbies, and Christmas is my favorite holiday. I’m really excited to share these things about me with my readers. I hope you have stuff you like to do too!

### Lesson: Day 3

**Standard 7.7.2.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information

Objectives	SRSD Phase
*SWBAT understand and discuss the essay prompt. *SWBAT analyze example writing based on essay prompt.	Discuss It

### Materials:

- Humans of New York Handout
  - Note: This handout can be created by going to <http://www.humansofnewyork.com/> and selecting different profiles for students to read. These profiles typically consist of a picture and a brief reflection on life detailed by that person. As a middle school teacher, I am discerning with the stories I put on my handout, as some stories are more raw and emotional than I am comfortable showing my students. I try to select a variety of stories, ones that I think my students will connect with, and I am sure to select a mix of child, teen, and adult profiles.
- Drawing Connections Handout
- Pre-organized groups, if necessary

### Procedures:

1. Think-Pair-Share: Students should review the POW + TREE mnemonic. Ask if anyone has it memorized yet. Be excited and celebratory if anyone does have it memorized. They must have it memorized by tomorrow.
2. Explain that students will use POW + TREE in the next few days to create a 5 paragraph essay that responds to the prompt: *Tell me three things people might not know about you.* Suggest that writing can be a way of revealing parts of ourselves to the world. Today, students will read stories of people from the blog, Humans of New York. Alleviate student nerves by ensuring that, although some of the stories on the blog are personal, students will not be required to share anything overly personal in their own writing.
3. Pass out Humans of New York Handout & Drawing Connections Handout. In groups of four, students should:
  - Read through all of the profiles.

- Based on similarities in life experiences they read about, groups should create categories on the Drawing Connections Handout to organize the profiles and stories. For example, one category could be *Parents were absent during childhood*.
  - Groups should be prepared to share at least one category with the class.
4. Bring the class back together. Ask for each group to share one category with the class. Write the categories up on the board.
5. Think-Pair-Share with partner:
- Which story **resonates** with you most?
  - Explain that resonating doesn't have to mean you had the same life experience. It could just be a story that really made you think, feel, etc. Scroll through the Humans of New York stories, asking students to raise their hand when you say the one that they resonated with most.
6. Draw a connection once again between the activity and the writing piece students will be completing: *Tell me three things people might not know about you*. Once again, student samples do not need to be overly personal.
7. For remaining class time, students should continue memorizing POW + TREE. These should be memorized for tomorrow's class.

Group Member Names: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read and examine the profiles given to you. Analyze the profiles to search for similarities between people. Then, group people together based on similar life experiences. List the categories and the people below.

Category #1

\_\_\_\_\_

Category #2

\_\_\_\_\_

Category #3

\_\_\_\_\_

Category #4

\_\_\_\_\_

Category #5

\_\_\_\_\_

### Lesson: Day 4

**Standard 7.7.2.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information
- b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

Objectives	SRSD Phase
*SWBAT review and memorize POW + TREE. *SWBAT observe, analyze, and discuss teacher modelling of the strategy. *SWBAT begin coming up with their own self-reinforcements.	Model It / Memorize It

#### Materials:

- Self-Reinforcement Sheet
- Digital POW + TREE Graphic Organizer to use on the SmartBoard

#### Procedures:

1. Begin by asking students to recite the memorized mnemonics POW + TREE. Have students do so in front of the class. Be celebratory. Insist that anyone who does not have it memorized do so tonight.
2. Explain that today, students will be watching the teacher model using POW + TREE to create her own essay. Students should watch and listen carefully. Ask students to pay close attention to what the teacher says and does when she gets stuck.
3. Get out POW + TREE Graphic Organizer. Use this to model planning your essay. Explain that students will receive this same graphic organizer tomorrow. See script for an example model.
4. After modelling, ask students to share the following with their partner:
  - What kind of things did I (the teacher) say to myself when I got stuck?
  - What was the most challenging part of writing my outline for me?
  - What do you think will be the most challenging part for you?
5. Ask students to think about times in life that are frustrating. Ask them to brainstorm strategies for what they do when they get frustrated. Share as a class. Make a list on the board. (For example, students might include: take a deep breath, count to 10, talk to a friend / family member, think and talk positively to myself, take a break, take a walk,



etc.) Explain that writing, like all academic tasks, can be frustrating, but working through the frustration is rewarding and grows us as humans and students.

6. Hand out Self-Reinforcements Sheet. Explain that students will be drafting helpful statements to themselves for each part of the writing process. Give examples. Students should then fill out the Self-Reinforcements sheet on their own.

## Example Modelling Script

*Self-talk that models self-regulation ideas and/or strategies are written in italics.*

Okay. So the first thing I need to do is begin with POW. P- Pick my idea. This is sometimes the trickiest part. Have you guys ever sat and stared at a blank piece of paper and have no idea where to begin? Yeah, me too. *Sometimes that's the hardest part for me, but these are all things that have to do with me, so I just have to brainstorm about that a little bit.* O- Organize my notes- this graphic organizer is going to help me do that. And W- Write a bit more. That's where my explanations are going to come in handy.

So the prompt says Tell me three things people might not know about you. I'm going to start by brainstorming my three things, so those will be my three topic sentences. Well, I know I want to pick things that are important to me, and I want to pick things that I can say a lot about. I have to write a whole body paragraph about each thing, and I know that'll be tricky if I don't have a lot to say about one of the things I pick.

Okay, so what do I like to do? I like to play soccer. I played soccer a lot actually growing up. I was on teams and things, so I think I have a lot to say about that one. So I'm going to start by writing that on my Graphic Organizer as my first Topic Sentence. Topic Sentence- that's the T in TREE.

**TS (Topic Sentence) 1: I like to play soccer.**

There's one. Okay, so two more. Hmm... Well, I'm thinking about other things people might not know about me.

*Boy, I'm kind of stuck. I don't know what to write about. Okay, but I'm not going to panic. I'm just in the brainstorming stage, so just take a deep breath. I'm going to think about stuff I've done in the past that's been really fun or exciting, since I probably can write a lot about that.*

I've got something! So not everyone knows that I went to Ireland for a study abroad trip when I was in college. That was really fun and exciting, and I have a lot of stuff I could say about that trip. There's my second topic sentence.

**TS2: I lived in Ireland for five months.**

Last one. I'm almost there. Hmm. Maybe I'll think about some of my favorites. Those are usually easy to talk about. Favorite food... spaghetti, favorite holiday... Christmas, favorite movie, favorite TV show... Hmm... You know, I think I could write the most about my favorite food.

**TS3: My favorite food is spaghetti.**

Nice! So the big topics are taken care of. Okay, now I have to think about reasons for each one, which are really just details. That's the R- Reasons and the E- Explanation in TREE. When I'm trying to come up with details, I like to ask myself the 5 W's: Who? What? When? Where? Why? I'll show you what I mean.

My first body paragraph is about soccer. Let me think about that. Who did I play with? Well, I played travelling soccer in middle school, and I played with a recreation league in high school. I made a lot of friends on both teams. I really didn't like my coach in middle school, but I loved my high school coach. That answers the who, what, and when. Although the what-- I could add my position. I played right midfield most. That was my position. I hated and was terrified of playing goalie. Where? I played soccer in Sioux Falls and Georgia, which is where I lived in middle and high school. Why? I loved being part of a team, making friends, and the thrill of scoring a goal or making a great play. It was exhilarating. I miss it now.

I think I have enough. Here we go; I'm just going to organize the information on my graphic organizer now. I don't have to write in complete sentences since this is an outline, but I do want to have enough information that I know what I was talking about later on.

- A. TS1: I like to play soccer.
  - a. R1 (reason 1): Played in middle and high school
    - i. Explanation: Didn't like middle school coach (He was an ex-army sergeant, and he scared me). Loved high school coach.
  - b. R2: Made lots of friends
    - i. Explanation: Both times, played with people from school. Great way to meet people and make friends to hang out with.
  - c. R3: I miss it now.
    - i. Explanation: Never forget the thrill of scoring a goal or making a great pass. Loved celebrating with the team afterward.

So the only thing I still have for this body paragraph is my E- Ending, Wrap it Up sentence. I want something that relates to my topic, but still kind of makes it clear that I'm done talking about that thing. Let's see.

**End (Wrap it Up): I know there are adult soccer leagues, so I might investigate those one day!**

*There, that works. I don't know if I love that last sentence, but I can always come back and fix it later, if I think of something better. It's better to write something down and come back then to let it get me stuck.*

Next body paragraph. *Boy, this is a lot of work. That's okay though. I have time, so I don't want to rush. And if I plan it out now, it'll make the writing part easier.*

My second body paragraph is about Ireland. Here we go-- what sticks out about that trip? Well, I went there with friends from college, and I made friends on the trip too. I got to travel a bunch

while I was there. My favorite place I went while travelling in Europe was the Czech Republic. It was so beautiful-- it looked like a fairytale. Ireland was so green, just like people envision. It does rain all the time; I didn't love that part. I held a lamb while I was there, and I went to all sorts of castles, so that was cool. I also was able to walk a lot of places instead of driving, and I liked that. Okay, I think I have enough to start.

- B. TS2: I lived in Ireland for 5 months.**
- a. R1: I studied abroad there.**
    - i. Explanation: Went with college friends, but also met people. Good friends from Ohio and Alaska.**
  - b. R2: I travelled in Europe while there.**
    - i. Explanation: Favorite place→ Czech Republic. So beautiful-- looked like a fairytale.**
  - c. R3: Did lots of fun things.**
    - i. Explanation: Memories that stick out-- holding a lamb and climbing different castles.**

Okay, I'm at the last sentence again. *My least favorite part, because it's kind of tricky to think of. I think of it as one final thought... what's the last thing I want people to think about?*

**End (Wrap it Up): Living in a foreign country was exciting, but challenging, and I think I grew as a person because of it.**

Awesome! Almost there. Last full body paragraph! This one is on spaghetti. I was careful with this one, because sometimes topics like favorite food, you don't really have enough to say. But I think I do with this one because it's associated with some good memories for me. When I first think of loving spaghetti, I think about what kind I like the most. I love spaghetti with meatballs, or really any kind of spaghetti with a tomato sauce, especially spicy sauce.

Spaghetti has kind of a special meaning for me because my grandpa was Italian. He passed away when I was little, but my memory of him always reminds me of those old-school Italian guys, and that makes me feel happy, to think about him. My mom always does the cooking in my house, especially when I was growing up, but the one time my dad would cook, his specialty, so to speak, was to make this meatball spaghetti. So that makes me think happy things too, because it was always a treat to eat Dad's spaghetti. He also would play this Italian music every time he made it and dance around the kitchen, and I loved that growing up. The smell too, of spaghetti.... Mmmm! Okay, I think I have enough.

- C. TS3: My favorite food is spaghetti.**
- a. R1: Favorite is spaghetti with meatballs**
    - i. Explanation: Love tomato sauce, the spicier the better.**
  - b. R2: Spaghetti reminds me of my Grandpa.**
    - i. Explanation: Old school Italian guy, passed away when I was little.**
  - c. R3: Dad made spaghetti as his "specialty" dish**

- i. **Explanation:** House would smell so good. He'd play Italian music and dance. I loved it.

**End (Wrap it Up):** Spaghetti reminds me of special memories with my family, and it's delicious, so it's a win-win in my book!

Hey! It was a lot easier coming up with that last sentence. *I'm getting the hang of this!*

Yes! I've got my three body paragraphs outlined now. Awesome. The last few things then are just a lot of repeating, kind of the "fluff" stuff, so to speak. My thesis statement is easy to write, because I've done the hard work of thinking of stuff already. All I have to do is make sure my three points are in order.

**Thesis Statement:** People might not know that I like to play soccer, I lived in Ireland for five months, and my favorite food is spaghetti.

Easy! Next is my Summary Statement sentence. So that's just like the thesis, but in different words. It's going to be the first sentence in my conclusion paragraph. How can I rephrase it, but keep my points the same? This is where I have to be a little bit of a wordsmith. Hm.... here we go.

**Summary Statement:** It might surprise my students to learn that I like to play soccer, I lived in Ireland for five months, and my favorite food is spaghetti.

Okay, now my least favorite part of this whole thing. *I hate coming up with my first and last sentence. It's a lot easier to do now, though, I think, that I know what my essay will be about. I think I get nervous because I've gotten used to staring at a blank sheet of paper, and that always makes me nervous. I can do this though, I know it. I've done the hard work, so I've just got to take a deep breath and feel confident.* Okay. First sentence. I want to make people keep reading, and it should connect somehow to what I'm going to talk about. Okay, how about this?

**Introductory Sentence:** We all have personal characteristics that other people might not know about us. When we let people get to know us, though, we build connections and share our lives with those around us.

Not bad! And final sentence. This will be the last sentence in my entire essay.

**Concluding Sentence:** When people get to know each other better, they might find similarities with people they considered very different from themselves.

Awesome! I've got a good outline here, so my essay should be pretty easy to write. Excellent!

**POW + TREE** Graphic Organizer

Pick my idea

Organize my notes

Write and say more

## Outline

**Introduction Paragraph**

Hook: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Statement (in order!): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TREE- Body Paragraphs**

Topic Sentence 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 1 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 2 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 3 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ending Sentence 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Topic Sentence 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reason 1 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reason 2 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Reason 3 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Ending Sentence 2: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Topic Sentence 3: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reason 1 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Reason 2 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Reason 3 + Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Ending Sentence 3: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Conclusion Paragraph**

Summary Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

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Clincher Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

## Self-Reinforcement Sheet

As I begin, I am most concerned/anxious about...

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---

When I get frustrated, I can (list at least 3 strategies / statements) ...

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---



---

While writing, I should remember to...

---



---



---

### Self-Check:

#### Introduction Paragraph

- Hook
- Thesis statement contains three points, listed in order of presentation
- Thesis statement is in the last sentence of the first paragraph

#### Body Paragraphs

#1	#2	#3
<input type="checkbox"/> Topic Sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic Sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic Sentence
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Reasons	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Reasons	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Reasons
<input type="checkbox"/> Explanations	<input type="checkbox"/> Explanations	<input type="checkbox"/> Explanations
<input type="checkbox"/> Ending Sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> Ending Sentence	<input type="checkbox"/> Ending Sentence

#### Conclusion Paragraph

- Summary statement is located in the first sentence of the conclusion paragraph
- Summary statement lists three points in order
- Summary statement is different than Thesis statement
- Clincher Statement



### Lesson: Day 5

**Standard 7.7.2.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information
- b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

Objectives	SRSD Phase
*SWBAT brainstorm ideas for their own essays. *SWBAT practice using their individual self-reinforcements *SWBAT complete a graphic organizer based on their own ideas and the POW + TREE strategy.	Support It

#### Materials:

- POW + TREE Graphic Organizer
- Student Self-Reinforcements (created yesterday)

#### Procedures:

1. Think-Pair-Share (Review from yesterday):
  - Yesterday, you watched me plan an essay of my own. What did I really struggle with? How did I help myself when I got stuck?
  - Get out your Self-Reinforcements sheet. Share with a partner. Which statement and/or strategy do you think will help you most when you get stuck?
2. Script: Today, you guys are going to be planning your own essays. We are going to work together, and we are going to help each other when someone gets stuck. Remind me, what does the P in POW stand for? Right, Pick your idea. Start by talking to your partner. Think about things you really enjoy or could talk about for awhile. What ideas do you have for answering the prompt: *Tell me three things people might not know about you?*
3. Encourage students to fill out the POW + TREE graphic organizer. They can work with their partners as they do so, helping each other, but their ideas should be their own. Circle the room as they work, helping students who get stuck. When a student gets stuck, encourage them first to use their Self-Reinforcements, and remind them of the strategies POW + TREE. Anyone who does not finish the graphic organizer in class should strive to finish it before class tomorrow.

### Lesson: Day 6

**Standard 7.7.2.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- c. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style

Objectives	SRSD Phase
*SWBAT observe, analyze, and discuss teacher modelling of using the graphic organizer to begin writing. *SWBAT begin writing their essays using their self-reinforcements and graphic organizers, utilizing teacher support as needed.	Support It

#### Materials:

- Copy of digital Graphic Organizer from Lesson 4
- Notebook paper for students

#### Procedures:

1. Ask students to get out their completed POW + TREE Graphic Organizer. Have them share the finished versions with their partner.
2. Today, the teacher will model how to take the ideas on the Graphic Organizer and put them into essay form. Students should watch carefully and listen. Ask them to observe, once again, how the teacher handles it when she gets stuck. Also, ask them to figure out how the essay and the Graphic Organizer are different.
3. Model taking the ideas from the Graphic Organizer and put them into essay form. The teacher should emphasize the following:
  - Addition of transition words like First, Second, Finally, etc. as you move from idea to idea
  - The use of complete sentences, as opposed to the phrases used in the Graphic Organizer
  - The ease of writing, now that the hard thinking has been completed in the Graphic Organizer
  - The use of self-reinforcements when the teacher gets stuck
4. Think-Pair-Share: After modelling, ask students to discuss what they observed.
  - What did the teacher say when she got stuck?
  - How did the essay differ from the Graphic Organizer?

- How do they feel getting started with their essay? Confident? Worried?
5. Students should begin writing their essays. Their Graphic Organizer, Self-Reinforcement sheet, and notebook paper should all be on their desk. The atmosphere should be quiet, to allow students the concentration to work effectively. If they get stuck, encourage them to use their Self-Reinforcements first, then ask a partner for help, then raise their hand. The teacher should circle the room and help as needed.

After completion of the lesson series:

- Allow more writing time in class, as needed
- Students should complete a self-review and peer-review of their papers. Editors should focus primarily on identifying the inclusion of various essay parts in the paper.
- Students should be assessed via the Assessment Rubric.
- Students should complete the Writing Skills Survey.
- Use POW + TREE and versions of the self-reinforcements throughout the year. If desired, have students graph and chart their writing growth over the course of the year.

## Appendix C

## Assessment Rubric

<b>Category</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Thesis statement and hook are missing.	Essay may be missing either the hook OR the thesis statement.	Hook is included, but may be weak OR main points are listed in the thesis statement, but are out of order.	Introduction contains a creative and intriguing hook. Thesis statement contains three points in the CORRECT order they are to be discussed.
<b>Body Paragraphs</b>	Essay does not contain three main points.	Essay contains 3 main points but may not have enough reasons and explanation.	Essay contains 3 main points and reasons for each main point, but may not have enough explanation.	Essay contains 3 main points, sufficient reasons, and explanations for each main point.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Conclusion is missing both a summary statement and a clincher statement.	Conclusion is missing either a clincher statement OR a summary statement.	Essay contains a summary statement and clincher statement. Summary statement may be out of order.	Essay contains a summary statement in which 3 points are listed IN ORDER. Should be different than thesis statement. Conclusion also contains a clincher statement.
<b>Grammar</b>	Essay has numerous grammatical errors that make reading and understanding difficult.	Essay shows some evidence of proofreading , but contains numerous grammatical mistakes.	Essay shows evidence of proofreading, but compound sentences are incorrectly written.	Essay shows clear attention to grammar. Includes correctly written compound sentences.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student used strategies POW + TREE while writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Student used self-statements and coping skills when/if frustrated

Appendix D  
Writing Skills Survey

**Directions:** On a scale of 1-5, please express your comfort level with the following tasks related to writing.

*1- not confident at all*

*3- somewhat confident*

*5- very confident*

I can brainstorm usable ideas for a 5 paragraph essay.

1      2      3      4      5

I can write a clear thesis statement that gives my reader a preview of the ideas to follow.

1      2      3      4      5

I can write a thorough body paragraph that contains support and details for the main point.

1      2      3      4      5

I know strategies for coping when I am frustrated with a writing task.

1      2      3      4      5

I can work through frustration and be successful with my writing.

1      2      3      4      5

