

I teach in a rural Vermont school of 150 students. While assessing my students' literacy at the beginning of the school year, I discovered that many of my 6th graders were reading up to 3 years below grade level. After I reviewed data from their previous years' interventions, I concluded that these students required a different approach to literacy. My students needed an approach that is tailored to their individual needs and honors their intellect. That is why I decided to become certified in the Orton-Gillingham approach through the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. After all, Orton-Gillingham worked for me—I learned to read and to appreciate my intellectual capabilities. So, I figured, it would do the same for my students.

Here's what I have learned so far about the Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach: OG is language-based, multisensory, structured, sequential, cumulative, cognitive, and flexible. These characteristics can be easily individualized based on a student's individual needs. The basic purpose of everything that is done in the OG approach, from recognizing individual words to composing a poem, is assisting the student to become a competent reader and writer.

My most salient insight from my OG training is how critical it is for those who teach struggling readers to have a profound knowledge of the reading brain as well as the structure of the English language. A few topics I learned about are the neuroscience of reading and dyslexia, stages of normal reading development, phonology, morphology, history and structure of the English language, how to teach everything from phonemic awareness, handwriting, and spelling patterns, how to select appropriate reading material, and use and interpretation of formal and informal diagnostic assessment measures. Most of all, I learned how to think critically about what I teach and how I teach it. In a nutshell, OG training

taught me how to teach literacy with flexibility and finesse to meet the numerous needs of my struggling students.

Before I studied the OG Approach, I only saw the complexities and irregularities of words in our language. Why is the word *bridge* spelled with -dge but the word *page* ends with -ge? How can I know if the letter "c" will say /k/ or /s/? I could not teach what I did not know. Now, I understand that every struggling reader needs to recognize that our language is actually predictable. The English language is complex, which is why our struggling readers deserve teachers who understand the complexity of the structure of the English language. Our students also deserve a teacher who understands how to teach literacy in a simple, concrete manner so that students are set up for success. There is an OG mantra which my OG Fellow repeatedly referenced and I find it very useful. With everything you teach, you should be able to answer three questions:

1. What am I teaching?
2. Why am I doing it?
3. How is it helping my student(s)?

As the school year came to a close, I anxiously awaited the results of the end-of-year benchmark literacy assessments. I was eager to know how the OG approach affected my students. I was delighted, but not surprised. Many of my students made up to 2 years of reading progress in just 1 year. Hanging up in my office I have a note from one of them which reads, "Ms. Mel, thank you for teaching me how to read better!" I am humbled to know that my students recognize me as an influence on their reading. I am inspired to know that my students recognize their own tremendous growth as readers. They have learned the same lesson I learned about myself: I learned to read, and I learned that I am intellectually capable.

## Self-Regulated Strategy Development for Teaching Writing

Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) is a research-based strategy used in a variety of academic areas; its major application has been to teach students how to write. SRSD was originally developed for students with learning disabilities (Graham & Harris, 2005), but has now been extended as a sound instructional strategy to enable all students to make progress—including ambitious progress—in writing (Harris, Graham, Mason, & Friedlander, 2008). It is frequently used across elementary, middle, and secondary levels at RTI Tiers 1, 2, and 3. In a word, it has wide flexibility and extensive application possibilities.

Research on SRSD has been extensively conducted in the United States and internationally, starting with students with learning disabilities and broadening to students with emotional and behavioral disorders, as well as students without disabilities who are not yet proficient writers. These students vary by age, type of classroom, and writing genre. Across the board, you can be absolutely confident that SRSD is a research-based instructional approach that has documented large gains for students that are maintained across time (Graham, Harris, & McKeown, 2013). In fact, it has more research documentation than any other instructional approach to writing. SRSD is an excellent example of the contributions that research-based special education instructional strategies have made for the benefit of all students.

Self-regulated strategy development synthesizes three major components: (1) mnemonic writing strategies, (2) self-regulation strategies, and (3) instructional stages.

**MNEMONIC WRITING STRATEGIES** As you learned in Chapter 3, mnemonic strategies include a pattern of letters or ideas that help you and your students remember important information. An example of a mnemonic strategy for teaching students to write a persuasive essay is presented in Figure 7.3 (De La Paz & Graham, 1979a; 1979b).

There are five mnemonic strategies for addressing different genres of writing, engaging in writing assessment, or writing to learn in the content areas. They are

- Story writing
- Narrative, expository, and persuasive writing
- Revising
- Taking a writing competency test
- Reading books (for example, science and social studies), making notes, and writing about what is learned.

**SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES** In addition to mnemonic writing strategies, the SRSD also includes self-regulation strategies that students use to master the writing process. In short, students need to have not only fundamental writing skills but also fundamental self-regulation capacities; with these two combined, students, including those with learning disabilities, can learn how to write. The four self-regulation strategies include goal setting, self-instruction, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement. *Guidelines for Teaching: Key Components of a Self-Regulation Strategy for Teaching Writing* offers useful suggestions.

Figure 7.3 STOP and DARE Mnemonic Strategy

**STOP**

Did I list ideas for both sides?  
If not, do this now.

Can I think of anything else?  
Try to write more.

Suspend judgment. Brainstorm ideas **for** and **against** the topic.

(For)	(Against)
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____

Another point I haven't yet considered is...  
Think of possible arguments.

Put a ✓ next to ideas you want to use.

Number your ideas in the order you will use them.

Place a "+" to show the side you will take in your essay.

Put an "x" next to an argument you want to dispute.

Remember:  
**D**evelop your topic sentence,  
**A**dd supporting ideas,  
**R**eject arguments, and  
**E**nd with a conclusion.

**T**ake a side. Place a "+" at the top of the box that shows the side you will take.

**O**rganize ideas. Decide which ideas are strong and which ideas you can dispute.

**P**lan more as you write. Remember to use all four essay parts, and continue planning.

Now write your essay on another piece of paper.

SOURCE: Used with permission from Susan Delapaz.

## Guidelines for Teaching

### Key Components of a Self-Regulation Strategy for Teaching Writing

**Goal setting: Have students set their goals and the steps to reach the goals to encourage strategic behavior.**

- Students create a plan and timeline for meeting goals.
- Students track their progress.

**Self-instruction: Teach students to overtly or covertly tell themselves what to do at each step of the writing process.**

- *Problem definition*—students must understand the writing tasks that they are undertaking (“I need to write a report on Martin Luther King Jr.”).
- *Focusing of attention and planning*—students use statements to focus their attention (“I need to write at least six paragraphs. I need to use at least three sources.”).
- *Strategy implementation*—students use statements to review the strategy (for example, STOP and DARE; see Figure 7.3) they will be using.
- *Self-evaluation*—students use statements to align the criteria of the assignment with their performance: “Do I have six paragraphs?” “Have I used three sources?”
- *Coping and self-control*—students use statements to reduce their worry and to enhance their confidence: “I am halfway done, and I can keep making progress.”

**Self-monitoring: Teach students self-assessment and self-recording.**

- *Self-assessment*—students use each step of the mnemonic strategy (for example, STOP and DARE; see Figure 7.3) to check their work and to make sure that all elements are addressed.
- *Self-recording*—students document their performance, typically on a chart or graph.

**Self-reinforcement: Teach students to highlight their success when they meet their goals.**

- Students make comments such as “I think the beginning of the report will grab attention.”
- Seek to avoid tangible rewards by teaching students the value of self-reward.

**Independent performance: Teach students to reach their writing goals automatically without needing to rely on the strategy.**

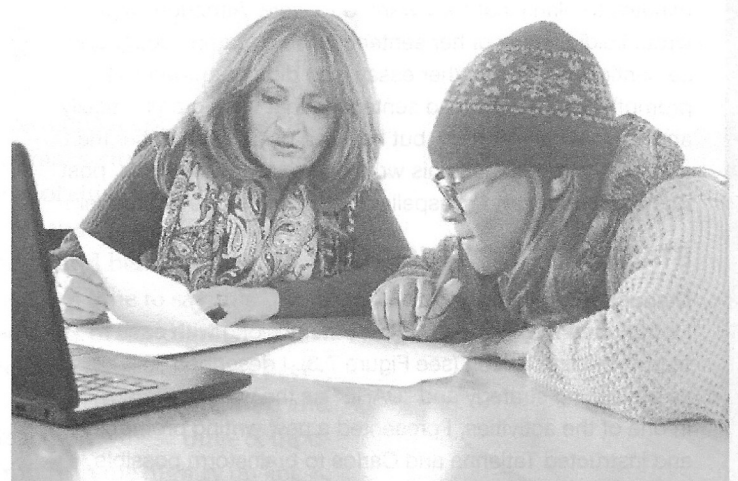
- Transition from using strategy and self-regulation guidelines overtly to doing this covertly.
- Self-regulation procedures can be faded over time.
- Teachers provide booster sessions as needed by students.

Source: Based on Harris, K. R., Graham, S., Mason, L. H., & Friedlander, B. (2008). *Powerful writing strategies for students*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

**STAGES OF INSTRUCTION** Instruction for writing and self-regulation consists of six stages. These apply regardless of the grade, tier, or needs of your students.

- Develop background knowledge
- Discuss it
- Model it
- Memorize it
- Support it
- Demonstrate independent performance

Lesson plans organize these stages flexibly, sometimes varying the order, modifying them, or combining two stages into one. Rather than moving through the stages in a linear fashion, students can circle back as needed to different stages. In *Into Practice Across Grade Levels: Self-Regulated Strategy Development Instruction for Teaching Writing*, you have an in-depth example of how Cindy Sherman, a speech and language pathologist, has taught two high school seniors (Tatianna and Carlos) to write argumentative essays.



Educator Cindy Sherman teaches Tatianna the STOP and DARE self-regulated strategy to improve her writing.

## Into Practice Across Grade Levels

### Self-Regulated Strategy Development Instruction for Teaching Writing

#### Meet the Students.

Carlos and Tatianna are 12th graders who have a learning disability. They each receive specialized instruction both in and out of the general education classroom, as well as speech-language services once a week for 30 minutes. Their speech-language goals focus on improving vocabulary, language formulation, and written language skills.

Tatianna requires significant support with organization, coherent ideas, sentence structure, and citing textual evidence. She especially benefits from graphic organizers during pre-writing activities, teacher-based rubrics, and checklists to support her grammar and spelling errors. Once Tatianna realized that strategy instruction was helping her improve her writing skills, she began for the first time sharing her papers on Google Docs and welcomed suggestions. She plans on going to college where she hopes to major in fashion design and business.

Carlos receives specialized instruction in reading, written expression, and math. Based on teachers' observations, Carlos needs assistance with stamina. He has a lot of responsibilities at home. He takes care of his five siblings when his mother is at work, feeds them, wakes them up, and gets them dressed for school. As a result, he often comes to school very tired. Carlos requires longer amounts of time to analyze text and articulate his ideas after reading text that is part of the curriculum. He does much better when he verbally expresses his personal opinion as contrasted to written expression. He plans on going to college and wants to be a computer engineer because he likes to work on computers and fix them.

#### Pre-Assessment.

Before instruction, I gave each student a public-released 12th-grade persuasive writing prompt from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The prompt was to argue whether or not community service should be required. They were given a blank planning sheet, and told they had 5 minutes to plan what they wanted to write. Although Tatianna wrote fluidly, many of her sentences were grammatically and semantically incorrect (her essay also did not answer the prompt). Carlos produced sentences that were grammatically and semantically correct, but he often used slang rather than appropriate language in his writing (e.g., wanna/want to, post to/supposed to) and misspelled one homophone (there/their).

### STAGES OF INSTRUCTION

#### Discuss the Strategy.

I introduced the STOP & DARE strategy along with each step in the first lesson (see Figure 7.3). I described "STOP" as a planning strategy and "DARE" as the writing strategy. In one of the activities, I presented a new writing prompt and instructed Tatianna and Carlos to brainstorm possible reasons for the argument under a "For" column and possible

reasons against the argument under an "Against" column. Both students needed explicit instruction to understand the meaning of a couple of STOP & DARE steps, including "suspend judgment" and "reject the argument for the other side."

#### Develop Background Knowledge.

I presented an exemplar persuasive essay and asked the students to compare the exemplar essay to their pre-instruction essay. Because Tatianna and Carlos are 12th graders and are expected to write at least a five-paragraph persuasive essay, I provided a graphic organizer to serve as an outline suggesting how students could expand their ideas. Students received a list of transition words as an additional tool (e.g., another, furthermore). I explained to them that once they brainstormed their ideas and took a side, the graphic organizer would help them as they worked through each step in DARE, by prompting them to elaborate on their topic sentence, ideas, argument, and conclusion.

#### Model It.

I modeled the STOP & DARE strategy across two 45-minute sessions. Throughout this stage of instruction, I demonstrated how to use STOP & DARE along with the graphic organizer to plan a persuasive essay. Much of this instruction was modeled by thinking out loud, providing a sentence starter, using self-instructions and self-monitoring statements (e.g., "Ok, what do I need to do first?"), and reciting the steps for STOP & DARE. I also modeled the use of transition words from one reason/idea to the next.

#### Memorize It.

From the time I introduced the STOP & DARE strategy, I asked Tatianna and Carlos to learn and memorize the meaning of the STOP & DARE mnemonic and its parts. Across three sessions, they were asked to complete a worksheet, take a quiz, and verbally name each part of the mnemonic. By the 4th session, both students had memorized the mnemonic and understood the steps for planning and composing; additionally, they were comfortable using the graphic organizer.

#### Support It.

I used the same writing prompt from before instruction a second time, but this time I added the STOP & DARE worksheet. I allowed Tatianna and Carlos to transfer ideas or topic sentences from their pre-instruction essays during this guided instruction. I provided explicit instruction—with both the mnemonic and the graphic organizer—as needed throughout the planning and writing process.

#### Independent Performance.

I presented a second writing prompt and removed all instructional supports to ensure Tatianna and Carlos were ready to write an essay independently.

### Post-Assessment.

Once Tatianna and Carlos demonstrated a clear understanding of STOP & DARE and were able to generate ideas and sentences without guidance, I again presented a post-instruction essay prompt from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. I gave Tatianna and Carlos a blank page to plan and the choice of writing or typing their post-instruction essay.

When comparing their work from pre-instruction to post-instruction, both Tatianna and Carlos demonstrated considerable growth. Tatianna's pre-instruction essay was 180 words, did not specifically address the prompt, and lacked important essay elements. Although Tatianna continued to struggle with syntax and semantics, she did a much better job

presenting her ideas after instruction. Her post-instruction essay included 252 words, contained all essay elements, was better organized, and clearly addressed the writing prompt. Carlos's pre-instruction essay was 98 words compared to 576 words in his post-instruction essay. He required two post-assessment sessions to complete his essay; however, no additional instruction was provided to him. He continued to have difficulty with sentence structure and semantics, but he demonstrated considerable improvement presenting his argument. It was especially gratifying to see that Carlos included self-generated quotes as evidence, then followed up with his analysis, something that the school consistently asked for in students' essays.

**SOURCE:** Written by Cindy K. Sherman, Ph.D., Founder and Director, The Write Turn. Strategy based on Susan De La Paz (2001). STOP and DARE: A persuasive writing strategy. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 36, 234–243. Used with permission.

Developers of SRSD recommend that 20- to 60-minute lessons occur at least 3 times per week. SRSD's developers have written an extensive book that has detailed descriptions for implementing all three components (Harris et al., 2008). In addition to providing foundational content, the authors explain nine mnemonic strategies with three to nine detailed lesson plans for each strategy. The lesson plans are accompanied by numerous charts and worksheets needed to implement the lesson plans.

Because SRSD for writing has such a strong research base in terms of positive student outcomes, there are multiple resources you can draw on.

## Instructional Commonalities

Tier 3 math instruction, Orton-Gillingham, and SRSD all have their special features; however, they have much in common. Some commonalities include opportunities for being embedded in multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS), explicit instruction, and self-instruction. Regarding embeddedness in MTSS, Orton-Gillingham and SRSD can be used at all tiers. Although the Tier 3 math instruction with its emphasis on curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is described as being specific to Tier 3, the use of CBM with computational fluency could be incorporated at Tiers 1 and 2 as well, especially in early elementary years, when all students are learning math facts. In terms of explicit instruction, each strategy emphasizes breaking larger skills down into smaller tasks and working sequentially with guided feedback and practice. Finally, a key link across strategies is the use of self-instruction; as students learn skills in a step-by-step fashion, they are encouraged to overtly and covertly guide themselves in staying focused on what they should do to demonstrate each specific skill. We hope you are "connecting the dots" that effective instruction for students with learning disabilities has many cross-cutting themes.

Now, pause for a moment before reading the summary of this chapter. Recall the student we described, Louise Hastings, and what we wrote about her. We wrote that her dignity within her school occurs because of her character and behavior. We wrote nothing about how she learns or how she is taught. However, it's time to say this: What Louise learns, and how her teachers instruct her, are components of her dignity. That is so because, for Louise and all students, their dignity—their capacity to earn their peers' and teachers' respect—will depend in part on how they approach their curriculum and how they master it. Character, behavior, and learning and teaching—these three components of a student—are elements of your students' dignity. You're in the dignity business.



This IRIS instructional module will teach you more about SRSD and specifically how to use it in a middle school general education classroom. Bear in mind that SRSD is effective across grade levels and subjects. <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/modules/srs/#content>

We encourage you to visit <http://www.SRSDonline.org> to review a comprehensive website that you can join to be part of the "SRSD Community." You will find teacher and student interviews, teacher resources, and a summary of research evidence shared by the developers, Dr. Harris and Dr. Graham.