

Handout: Adaptations for Struggling Writers using CARES

Change the Learning Environment Accommodations

- Increase instructional time for writing
- Provide quiet and comfortable spaces for students to work
- Provide unimpeded access to writing tools
- Let students identify and select meaningful reinforcements for achieving writing goals (e.g., a reinforcement menu)
- Consult with an occupational therapist to identify specialized adaptations (e.g., chair and desk height)

Adapt the Instructional Materials Accommodations

- Simplify language of writing prompts
- Highlight (e.g., color code) key words and phrases
- Transition from simple to more elaborate graphic organizers and procedural checklists
- Post strategies, graphic organizers, and checklists in classroom and give students personal copies
- Develop individualized spelling lists
- Have students keep a personal dictionary of “demon” words and frequently used spelling vocabulary
- Provide paper positioning marks on students’ desks
- Provide pencil grips for students
- Provide raised- or colored-lined paper
- Provide students with personal copies of alphabet strips

Revise Your Teaching Strategies Accommodations

- Devote more instructional time to writing mechanics
- Provide physical assistance during handwriting practice
- Re-teach writing skills and strategies

- Expect and support mastery learning of skills and strategies (e.g., memorization of strategy steps)
- Use cross-age peer tutors to reinforce skills and strategies
- Assign homework designed to reinforce writing instruction
- Help students set specific and challenging yet attainable goals for the writing process (e.g., completing a planning sheet before beginning to draft) and written products (e.g., a quantity goal of including 10 descriptive words in a story, which is perhaps linked to a quality goal of improving word choice by two points on an analytic quality scale)
- Help students develop self-instructions (e.g., “I can handle this if I go slow.”) and self-questions (e.g., “Am I following my plan?”) that focus on positive attributions for success and task progress
- Teach students to evaluate and adjust their writing behaviors and writing strategy use to improve their writing productivity and performance
- Promote maintenance and generalization of writing strategies by doing the following:
 - Modeling and discussing how strategies may be used in multiple contexts
 - Relating writing performance to strategy use
 - Having students teach others how to use strategies
 - Having students keep a strategy notebook which they can consult at any time
 - Ensuring all staff and caregivers are familiar with and prompt the use of the strategies
 - Reviewing strategies often

Exchange Task Demands Modifications

- Increase amount of time allotted for completing written assignments
- Decrease the length and/or complexity of written assignments
- Have students complete text frames (i.e., partially finished texts)
- Reduce or eliminate copying demands (e.g., teach students abbreviations for note taking, supply worksheets with math problems from textbook)
- Allow students to use temporary/invented spelling
- Pre-teach spelling vocabulary for assignments

- Evaluate spelling using correct letter sequences (e.g., *hopping* has 8 possible correct letter sequences) rather than number of words spelled correctly to measure and reward incremental progress attributable to partial correct spelling
- Permit students to dictate written work to a scribe
- If students have adequately developed keyboarding skills, permit them to write papers with a word processor
- Permit students to use outlining and semantic mapping software to facilitate planning
- Permit students to use voice recognition technology to facilitate text transcription
- Permit students to use integrated spell checker and/or word prediction software to facilitate correct spelling
- Permit students to use speech synthesis technology to facilitate revising and editing
- Selectively weight grading for content, organization, style, and conventions
- Grade assignments based on the amount of improvement rather than absolute performance
- Assign letter grades for body of work collected over time (i.e., portfolio assessment) rather than for each paper
- Provide feedback on content, organization, style, and conventions for some rather than all assignments (which may reduce students' anxiety about writing)
- Provide feedback on targeted aspects of writing rather than all aspects to avoid overwhelming students

Substitute Learning Tasks for PLOP Modifications

- Permit students to dramatize or orally present a written assignment, either in lieu of writing or in preparation for writing
- Assign students suitable roles (e.g., brainstorm manager) for the creation of a group-generated paper

Note that these accommodations and modifications possess face validity, but many of them have not been empirically validated for struggling writers.