



Step Up to Writing Reviews and Evaluations



Journal Article

Cihak, D. F., & Castle, K. (2011). Improving expository writing skills with explicit and strategy instructional methods in inclusive middle school classrooms. *International Journal of Special Education, 26*(3), 106-113.

ABSTRACT: Forty eighth grade students with and without learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom participated in an adapted Step-Up to Writing (Auman, 2002) intervention program. The intervention targeted expository essays and composing topic, detail, transitional, and concluding sentences. A repeated-measures ANOVA indicated that both students with and without disabilities made significant improvements in expository writing skills as measured on the state's criterion reference test for written expression.

Dissertations and Master's Theses

Aldrich, A. (2009). *"I'm a star pupil." How the color-coding strategy used in Step Up to Writing helps third graders better organize their expository writing and improve their self-confidence as writers* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 1471244)

ABSTRACT: Research Question. How might the color-coding techniques used in *Step Up to Writing* help third graders organize and improve their expository writing? (1) How does using this technique for note taking help students retain more information when writing about what they read? (2) How does this approach influence students' ability to expand a single paragraph into a multi-paragraph piece of writing? (3) After using this technique, will students be able to identify properly formed paragraphs and improperly formed ones? (4) Does using this technique improve students' opinion of themselves as writers? Research Activities: This research explores the use of the color-coding strategy presented in the *Step Up to Writing* curriculum with struggling third grade writers. The focus of the intervention was on organization of writing. Context. This study took place in a self-contained third grade classroom at St. Jude Catholic Elementary. The study focused on three monolingual English students who struggled particularly with organizing their writing. Methods and Data. The intervention lasted eight weeks and utilized the resources found in the *Step Up to Writing* curriculum as well as the formal steps of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, teacher conferencing, and publishing. Data sets include pre and post paragraph writing assessments, pre and post attitude survey data, teacher observations during writing, and student work throughout the intervention. Results: Results showed that using the strategies from *Step Up to Writing* allowed students to take the first steps toward improving the organization of their writing. Although data only showed slight improvement, further practice and reinforcement would allow students to further improve in their writing.

Esmat, G. (2009). *"That graphic organizer is awesome" A study examining second grade writers using a graphic organizer and checklist to improve their writing* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 1471218)

ABSTRACT: Research Question. How does the teaching of an organizational checklist and graphic organizers affect struggling second grade students in their informational writing? Sub Questions: (1) Would an organizational checklist lead to better informational writing? (more writing samples with a level 3 according to AUSD rubric); (2) Would a graphic organizer lead to better informational writing? (more writing samples with a level

3 according to AUSD rubric). Research Activities: This research focuses on teaching students to organize their writing better by using the *Step Up to Writing* approach. The students were introduced to a graphic organizer which they used throughout the inquiry. The students then were taught to use a writing checklist to help them organize and improve their writing skills. Context. The study took place in a self contained second grade classroom in a public school. The intervention was implemented with the whole class, but focused on four focus students. Out of the four students, one was an English language learner, whose primary language was Chinese. Methods and Data. The intervention lasted a period of six weeks and incorporated a variety of writing activities to practice the tools being taught in the inquiry. In addition, peer work through the use of the writing checklist increased collaboration. Data sets include a pre and post writing assignment, an attitudinal survey and a series of observations. Results: The comparisons of pre and post intervention data indicate that the use of the graphic organizer and writing checklist positively increased students' scores. The writing activities, with the use of the writing tools improved the students' with the organization of their writing and their ability to focus on one topic. Using the checklist gave students the ability to work with one another creating a sense of responsibility.

Nguyen, S. (2009). *Graphic organizer and checklist: Strategies to improve summarization skills* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 1471124)

ABSTRACT: Research question(s). How will teaching the use of a graphic organizer and a checklist help struggling fourth and fifth grade students improve their structure and content of summary writing after reading a news article? (1) Will using *Step Up to Writing* strategies that are organized into one graphic organizer help the structure of students' summaries to include a topic sentence, details, and a conclusion? (2) Will using a checklist, which include the questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how, improve students' ability to recognize whether their summaries include the most important information from the news article reading? (3) Will using *Step Up to Writing* strategies that are organized into one graphic organizer help students' ability to figure out a logical progression of ideas in their news article summaries? Research activities: Context: The study took place in combination class of fourth and fifth grade students at a public school in the Bay Area. The intervention was especially focused on five students. Two of the students were fourth grade students and three of the students were fifth grade students who were all struggling with summarization. Although I had English language learners in my class, these five students who were not English language learners were having the most trouble with summarizing articles. Methods and Data: The whole-class intervention lasted six weeks, but three of the weeks were an interruption due to the Winter Break. Each day varied between 45 minutes to an hour and a half depending on students' needs. The students were expected to use a graphic organizer created using *Step Up to Writing* strategies and a checklist in order to help students with their article summaries. The data sets used were the grading of summaries based on a rubric done as a pre- and a post-intervention assessment, attitudinal data found through a survey also done as a pre- and a post- assessment, and in-the-midst notes written daily. Results: Comparisons of baseline data to outcome data suggested that using a graphic organizer and a checklist improved students' ability to write an article summary. My target students improved their average score from a 4.8 to a 9.5. The class average improved from 6.8 to 9.8 out of a total of 12 points. The graphic organizer was able to assist students in organizing their ideas in a logical progression, help students create a topic sentence, conclusion sentence, and indicate where details are expected in a paragraph. The checklist helped students pull out the most important information of the article to include in their summary. Together, these two strategies led to drastic improvement in writing.

Rozeski, D. L. (2012). *21st century students–20th century teaching models: Instructional strategies to increase student achievement* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 3522182)

ABSTRACT: Students and teachers have been teaching and learning for centuries, but the methodologies have remained constant. This study investigated several current teaching strategies and focused on three: Response to Intervention (Rtl), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), and *Step Up to Writing* (SUTW) to determine if they were effective to meet the needs of 21st century learners. The study was conducted in a diverse, urban setting in Southern California in a school district in year four plus of Program Improvement (PI) as determined by the California Department of Education. Results of this study indicated that SIOP had the highest effect in descriptive statistics over Rtl, but had the lowest effect on student achievement as measured by the CST scores compared over two years. SUTW was the only strategy that indicated a significant increase in student achievement as indicated by the results of the CST scores.

Russell, L. (2010). *Language development for the deaf and hard of hearing using "Step Up to Writing"* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 3451753)

ABSTRACT: Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) students often do not graduate with their same age peers, continue on to college, have satisfying social and emotional relationships, or achieve gainful employment as adults due to their delays in language and communication skills (Antia, Stinson, & Gaustad, 2002; Siegel, 2002a). The purpose of this study is to determine and align the Kern County Superintendent of Schools' Deaf Education Program with the research-based elements of a quality D/HH program and to explore the instructional program of *Step Up to Writing* as a viable curricular tool for improving English and language skills for the D/HH population in the Kern County Superintendent of Schools' Deaf Education Program. The statistical evidence generated by the t-Test: Two Sample Assuming Unequal Variances, supported *Step Up to Writing* as an option for language skills development and curricular changes within the KCSOS Deaf Education Program. The continued collection of data through a longitudinal study of fourth- through eighth-grade D/HH students in the KCSOS Deaf program will develop certainty of these findings.

Smith, K. A. (2008). *Reading writers and writing readers: The impact of the Step Up to Writing literacy program on diverse 6th grade students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 3334588)

ABSTRACT: The goal of this study was to assess whether skill specific, expository writing instruction would improve reading comprehension and writing development in both expository and narrative texts through the use of subcomponents. The current study focused on expository instructional practices, reading comprehension, and writing growth in order to fill a gap in current educational research (Pressley, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000). There were 136 sixth-grade students who were randomly assigned to vocabulary development, summary writing, or control conditions. Students were pre-tested on reading comprehension and writing skills in both narrative and expository texts. All students in treatment conditions received either vocabulary or summary writing instruction on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for a total of 10 hours, and the regular writing program on Tuesdays and Thursdays for one month for a total of 8 hours. The control condition received the regular writing program everyday for a month for a total of 18 hours of instruction. At the end of the study, students were post-tested. All students showed significant growth in expository reading comprehension and writing,

which was of comparable magnitude for both Native English Speakers and English Language Learners. Treatment effects were not found. However, consistent, ongoing writing instruction resulted in students' growth in comprehending and writing expository texts, but not narrative texts.

Steever, J. (2012). *The impact of goal setting on fourth grade writing proficiency* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 1511083)

ABSTRACT: Goal setting and writing proficiency were the focus of this action research. The participants involved twenty-three fourth grade students from a Title One school in a fairly large school district. The goal setting process of Plan, Do, Study, and Act are implemented in the district. The high-yield writing strategies including extensive modeling of various pieces pulled from the likes of *6 + 1 Traits of Writing*, *Schoolwide Fundamentals*, *Step Up to Writing*, and *Lucy Calkins: Writer's Workshop*. The action research shows through goal setting, writing scores increased in the Language Usage Assessment. The research also found that students transferred goal setting into other academic areas.

Thayer, R. (2005). *Step Up to Writing* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 1430098)

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to examine the overall effectiveness of the *Step Up to Writing* program. Using the framework of a qualitative inquiry involved a full year of on-site classroom observations, interviews, student work, and WASL data evaluation. My research also encompassed the importance of literacy, the reading and writing relationship, the writing process, individual differences in writing ability, writing across the curriculum, instructional strategies for writing, and the basis for developing a successful writing program in education. The findings from this study suggest that using a structured writing program has a positive impact on student success.

Velasco, R. (2009). *Step Up to Writing, step into summaries: Improving the organization of student summary writing with the use of outlines* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI Number: 1471136)

ABSTRACT: Research question(s). How will teaching and using outlining as a planning strategy impact the organization of second-grade students' summary writing? (1) How will the content quality of student summary writing improve after teaching, modeling, and scaffolding the use of outlines and writing frames? (2) How will this research on second-graders' writing organization impact a teacher's perceptions about teaching writing? Research activities: This research explores the use of outlines as a planning strategy to facilitate second-grade students' writing and impact the organization and content quality of students' summary writing. Context: The study took place in a second grade, self-contained classroom composed of a diverse group of students with a wide range of academic needs. The intervention targeted six students who represented a continuum of writing skills and abilities: Proficient, Basic, Below Basic. One of the six focus students was an English Language Learner, and one was receiving additional services for language development. Methods and data: The intervention occurred over a course of nine weeks and comprised of sixteen writing sessions. Session activities ranged from whole class, direct instruction on intervention components, small group brainstorming and practice with *Step Up to Writing* (Auman, 2003) graphic organizers, and independent application of outlines and writing of drafts.

Data sets included pre and post parent surveys, student writing samples, teacher observations, and teacher-created newspapers documenting the students' work and community's responses. Results: From the analysis of preliminary and outcome data, students demonstrated growth in their summary writing. Improvements varied, but were noted in both the quality of structure and content of writing. Improvement in organization was demonstrated through increase in use of transition words and appropriate order of sentence structures; improvement in content quality was demonstrated through increase in details and explanation/example sentences, as well as the strength of support; in addition, overall student self-efficacy was shown to improve through teacher observation. Conclusion. The inquiry findings suggest that targeting a writing strategy with the use of supplements from a prescribed writing program, such as teaching and using informal outlines as a planning strategy prior to drafting paragraphs, may work towards improving the structure and organization of a paragraph. Findings suggest that strategies working to improve the organization of writing may also work to enhance the content quality of student work. In addition, home-school connections and teacher perceptions about teaching writing may be reinforced and strengthened through the implementation of a targeted intervention.

Internal Reports

Sopris West Educational Services. (2009). *Technical report: Step Up to Writing implementation results Los Angeles Unified School District, CA (2001-2003)*. Longmont, CO: Author.

During the 2001–2002 school year, a program evaluation of *Step Up To Writing* was conducted at Emerson Middle School in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Emerson Middle School serves approximately 1440 students from 6th to 8th grade. Emerson has a large proportion of ethnic minority students; approximately 57% are Hispanic, 25% are African-American, 10% are Caucasian, and 7% are Asian. As a reference point for evaluating the gains made by the students at Emerson, students from Bancroft Middle School served as a comparison group. Using the Stanford Achievement Test - Series 9 Writing Assessment as the dependent measure and a repeated-measures ANOVA, student from the intervention group showed statistically significant growth from the fall to the spring, while the comparison group scores remained essentially unchanged.