

### Recommendation 2a. Teach students the writing process.

#### How to carry out the recommendation

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##### 1. Teach students strategies for the various components of the writing process.

Students need to acquire specific strategies for each component of the writing process.<sup>33</sup> Table 3 shows 10 examples of writing strategies and the grades for which they are appropriate. Students should learn basic strategies, such as POW (Pick ideas, Organize their notes, Write and say more), in 1st or 2nd grade. More complicated strategies, such as peer revising, should be introduced in 2nd grade or later. Many strategies can be used to assist students with more than one component of the writing process. For example, as students plan to write a persuasive essay, they may set goals for their writing, such as providing three or more reasons for their beliefs. Students should

A **strategy** is a series of actions (mental, physical, or both) that writers undertake to achieve their goals. Strategies are tools that can help students generate content and carry out components of the writing process.

then devise a plan for periodically assessing their progress toward meeting these goals as they write. As students evaluate their draft text, they may reread their paper to determine whether they have met the goals they articulated during planning. If not, students may revise their writing to better meet their goals.

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

Table 3. Examples of writing strategies<sup>34</sup>

Component of the Writing Process	Writing Strategy	How Students Can Use the Strategy	Grade Range
<b>Planning</b>	POW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pick ideas (i.e., decide what to write about).</li> <li>▪ Organize their notes (i.e., brainstorm and organize possible writing ideas into a writing plan).</li> <li>▪ Write and say more (i.e., continue to modify the plan while writing).</li> </ul>	1–6
	Ordering ideas/outlining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Brainstorm/generate ideas for their paper.</li> <li>▪ Review their ideas and place a number by what will go first, second, third, and so on.</li> </ul>	1–2
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Brainstorm/generate ideas for their paper.</li> <li>▪ Decide which are main ideas and which are supporting ideas.</li> <li>▪ Create an outline that shows the order of the main ideas and the supporting details for each main idea.</li> </ul>	3–6
<b>Drafting</b>	Imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Select a sentence, paragraph, or text excerpt and imitate the author's form (see Recommendation 2b, examples 2 and 3).</li> </ul>	1–6
	Sentence generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Try out sentences orally before writing them on paper.</li> <li>▪ Try multiple sentences and choose the best one.</li> <li>▪ Use transition words to develop different sentence structures.</li> <li>▪ Practice writing good topic sentences.</li> </ul>	3–6
<b>Sharing</b>	Peer sharing <sup>35</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In pairs, listen and read along as the author reads aloud.</li> <li>▪ Share feedback with their writing partner, starting with what they liked.</li> </ul>	2–6
	"Author's Chair"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sit in a special chair in front of peers and read their writing (see Recommendation 4, example 6, for more detail).</li> </ul>	K–6
<b>Evaluating</b>	Self-evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reread and ask these questions:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the ideas clear?</li> <li>• Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end?</li> <li>• Does the writing connect with the reader?</li> <li>• Are sentence types varied?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2–6
	Self-monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-assess and ask these questions, either out loud or internally:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did I meet the goals I developed for my writing? If not, what changes should I make to meet my goals?</li> <li>• Did I correctly use strategies that were appropriate for this task? If not, what should I change?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Record their answers to self-assessment questions on a chart or teacher-provided questionnaire in order to track their progress toward writing goals and strategy use.</li> <li>▪ Congratulate themselves, and inform their teacher, when they meet their goals.</li> </ul>	3–6
<b>Revising and editing</b>	Peer revising <sup>36</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place a question mark (?) by anything they do not understand in their writing partner's paper.</li> <li>▪ Place a carat (^) anywhere it would be useful to have the author include more information.</li> </ul>	2–6
	COPS (editing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask the COPS editing questions:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did I Capitalize the first word in sentences and proper names?</li> <li>• How is the Overall appearance of my paper?</li> <li>• Did I use commas and end-of-sentence Punctuation?</li> <li>• Did I Spell each word correctly?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2–6

### 2. Gradually release writing responsibility from the teacher to the student.

Writing strategies should be taught explicitly and directly through a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student.<sup>37</sup> Teachers should ensure that students have the background knowledge and skills they need to understand and use a writing strategy. Then, teachers should describe the strategy and model its use. Teachers also should articulate the purpose of the strategy, clearly stating why students might choose to use it as a way of improving their writing. Teachers then should guide students to collaborate in small groups to practice applying the strategy.

Once students demonstrate an understanding of the strategy, the teacher should encourage students to practice applying it as they write independently. Teachers should make sure they do not release responsibility to students too early. In some cases, this may mean having students spend more time in activities that are teacher directed until they develop the knowledge and skills to become more independent. Conversely, if some students are particularly strong in understanding and applying a new strategy, teachers can create collaborative peer groups in which more adept students help peers better understand, use, and apply new strategies.

Figure 1 illustrates the gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student. In this scenario, the teacher uses brainstorming, a planning strategy. Brainstorming can be used with any grade level; students may brainstorm by writing words or drawing pictures to represent their ideas.

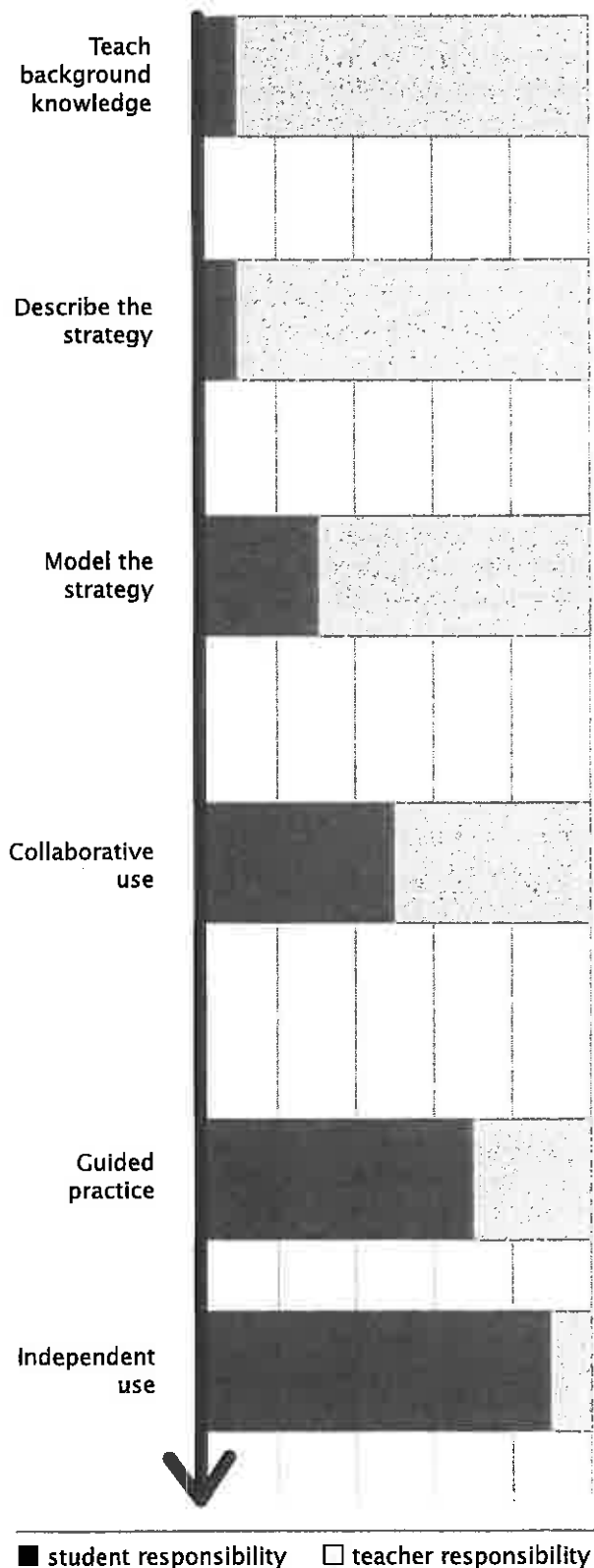
To adapt writing strategy instruction to individual students, teachers should assess students as they acquire new strategies, determining where instruction needs to be reinforced. Teachers may need to model an entire strategy or parts of a strategy again before students can work independently. Some students may need more time, practice, and assistance to master a strategy. While the amount of guided practice that individual students need will vary, practice is necessary for all students. In other words, it is not enough to simply describe the strategy and show how to use it.

For students who acquire a strategy easily and more quickly than their peers, teachers should consider increasing the complexity of the strategy. For example, teachers can increase the complexity of the brainstorming activity by additionally requiring students to research their topic online. Students also can explore using the strategy in new ways and with new tasks.

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

**Figure 1. Gradual release of responsibility to students<sup>38</sup>**

### Sharing Responsibility for the Task



### Gradual Release of the Brainstorming Strategy

*The teacher provides background knowledge, including why students should use the strategy and how it will help them:* "What you write will be more interesting for others to read if you have a lot of good ideas, so you should take the time to write down all your ideas before you get started. One way to do this is to use a strategy called *brainstorming*. In brainstorming, you write down as many ideas as you can think of without worrying about whether they are good or bad."

*The teacher describes the strategy:* "Brainstorming helps you think about what you already know. You write down as many ideas as you can think of. You do not think about whether they are good or bad ideas while you do this. When you write down a lot of ideas, you may find some ideas that you didn't think about before. This is a good strategy to use when you don't have many ideas or when you aren't sure what you want to include in your writing."

*The teacher models how to use the strategy, soliciting ideas from students:* "I am going to show you how to brainstorm before writing a story on your topic. First, I will write down any idea that I think of about this topic. If I get stuck, I will keep thinking. I will not ask myself if an idea is a good one until I am done brainstorming. I will just write down any idea that pops into my head." *The teacher thinks aloud while modeling brainstorming, then asks:* "Does anyone else have any ideas to add to my list?"

*Students collaborate in small groups to practice applying the strategy. The teacher explains:* "I want each of you to pair up with another student. Before you start to write your story, the two of you should brainstorm as many ideas as you can for your paper on this topic. Remember not to worry about whether the ideas are good or bad. Right now, I just want you to focus on writing down as many ideas as you can." *While students practice using the strategy, the teacher checks to see that students are using the strategy properly and returns to earlier steps as needed.*

*Students practice the strategy, with assistance from the teacher as needed. The teacher says:* "Remember to brainstorm as many ideas as you can before you actually start writing your own paper." *While students generate their lists, the teacher walks around and assists students in applying the strategy.*

*Students apply the strategy independently. The teacher reminds them:* "Before you start to write, you should stop and ask if it will be helpful for you to use brainstorming to think about ideas for writing. Remember that brainstorming works well when you don't have many ideas or you aren't sure what you want to include in your writing." *If, in future lessons or on future topics, the teacher notices that students are having a hard time planning, he or she can remind students to use the brainstorming strategy.*

## Recommendation 2 *(continued)*

### 3. Guide students to select and use appropriate writing strategies.

When students initially learn to use writing strategies, teachers frequently should discuss when and how to use the strategies throughout the writing process, as well as why the strategies are helpful.<sup>39</sup> Once students learn to use a variety of strategies independently, through the gradual release process, teachers should help them understand how to select appropriate strategies and use them across a range of writing tasks.

To help students select the appropriate writing strategy, teachers might consider posting strategies on a wall chart in the classroom. One column of the chart might include a list of all the strategies, and another column might provide a list of situations in which these strategies could be used. Once students are able to use a strategy effectively and independently, they can identify and add situations to the chart. Students also can identify opportunities to apply strategies in different content areas.

Beyond knowing when and how to use a strategy, students must actually use it as they write. This can be facilitated by having students set a goal to use the strategy in one or more identified situations, followed by a discussion (and/or instruction) on how the strategy needs to be modified.<sup>40</sup> For example, planning strategies may vary based on the purpose of students' writing. Ordering ideas and outlining strategies lend themselves to report writing; brainstorming strategies can be useful for narrating; and setting goals, particularly audience goals, can help students improve their persuasive writing (see Recommendation 2b for information about teaching students to write for a variety of purposes). Students should evaluate their success in applying the strategy to the new situation and should consider how they can make the strategy work even better.<sup>41</sup>

### 4. Encourage students to be flexible in their use of the components of the writing process.

Writing requires flexibility and change. Once students have acquired a set of strategies to carry out the components of the writing process, they need to be purposeful in selecting strategies that help them meet their writing goals. They also need to learn to apply these strategies in a flexible manner,<sup>42</sup> moving back and forth between different components of the writing process as they develop text and think critically about their writing goals. For example, plans and already written text may need to be revised and edited numerous times to communicate more effectively, and

writing must be polished to make it suitable for publication.

Teachers should engage students in writing activities in which the writing process does not move in a lockstep fashion from planning to drafting to revising to editing to publishing. Rather, teachers should design activities in which students are encouraged to move back and forth between the components of the writing process as their text takes shape (see Example 1).