

RESEARCH AND STANDARDS

Brain research has verified that writing is a complex skill that requires the coordination of both cognitive thought processes and fine motor skills. *Basic Writing Series* was designed to provide students with multiple opportunities to practice both handwriting and organization of thoughts. By beginning with activity sheets that allow students to practice writing letters and words and moving step-by-step from topic generation to basic paragraph construction, this program breaks the complex system of writing into its most basic parts and helps students build the foundation necessary for writing a coherent paragraph. This approach is particularly helpful for students with dysgraphia, “the persistent condition of not being able to put thoughts into writing or accomplish other parts of the writing process (such as letter formation)” (Sousa, 2001).

Research on teaching writing to students with dysgraphia indicates a need for both numerous practice activities and the part-to-whole approach emphasized in this book. Richards notes, “Some students may be able to copy and write single sentences with a fair degree of ease, but they struggle tremendously with paragraph writing. These students will need to be taught techniques that enable them to perform each subpart prior to pulling together all the parts. Substantial modeling will be necessary at each stage for the student to be successful” (1999).

The graphic organizer developed in this program for the “Think, Organize, Write” method is particularly useful for struggling writers, according to the research. For example, Sousa states that one of the modification strategies for students with writing disorders is to “encourage graphic organizers. Preorganization strategies such as the use of graphic organizers will help students get their main ideas in line before tackling the writing process” (2001).

The “Think, Organize, Write” method helps students pull their thoughts together and then guides them in writing coherent sentences and paragraphs. As Gersten, Baker, and Edwards state, “Teaching students to write requires showing them how to develop and organize what they want to say and guiding them in the process of getting it down on paper” (1999).

Basic Writing Series meets both state and national standards (including the Standards for the English Language Arts, which are sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association) regarding writing instruction. As students learn and practice the “Think, Organize, Write” method in this book, they will:

- learn an effective, visual strategy for writing coherent sentences and paragraphs.
- learn to clearly communicate their main idea and support it with appropriate details.
- write for the purpose of explaining and describing given topics.
- produce cohesive three-sentence paragraphs.
- increase their written vocabulary.

Gersten, Russell, Scott Baker, and Lana Edwards. (1999). *Teaching Expressive Writing to Students with Learning Disabilities*. (ERIC/OSEP Digest E590). Reston, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, Council for Exceptional Children. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED439532).

Richards, Regina G. (1999, May). *Strategies for Dealing with Dysgraphia*. Retrieved January 21, 2004, from the LD Online Web site: http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/writing/dysgraphia_strategies.html

Sousa, D. A. (2001). *How the Special Needs Brain Learns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.