A WRITING HANDBOOK FOR MIDDLE YEARS TEACHERS
USING THE SELF-REGULATED STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

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Introduction

In the twenty-first century people need to manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of information in order to function in today’s society. This puts demands on today’s adolescents for the future because they will need to read and write more, than in previous decades in order to perform jobs, run their households, and act as citizens within an information rich society (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Graham & Hebert, 2010; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2007). One specific concern related to adolescent literacy is the quality of writing that students in the United States and Canada are demonstrating once they graduate from high school. Adolescents are not always seen as having adequate writing skills that are needed for college and the work place. According to the National Commission on Writing (2004), American businesses spend $3.1 billion yearly, to improve employees’ skills in writing. Writing is important in the work force because it is needed to produce written reports, presentations, and for E-mail communication (Graham & Perin, 2007a; Wosley & Grisham, 2012).

Hyland, Howell, and Zhang (2010) have noticed with the increased postsecondary population in Ontario “writing ability appears to be one skill that is most variable among this population” (p. 6). The problem related to the quality of adolescent writing has drawn attention to how schools are teaching writing and how adolescents are being prepared to function as literate members within society. The information in this handbook has significance for teachers that teach English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. There is a clear need that writing strategies need to be taught in all subject area so that students become well-rounded writers. According to Biancarosa and Snow
(2006), content area teachers should provide both instruction and practice “in writing skills specific to their subject area” (p. 4). It is important to respect and understand that each discipline is different and “requires particular kinds of literacy skills” (Knipper & Duggan, 2006). According to Shanahan & Shanahan (2008) “writing instruction should become increasingly disciplinary” (p.57). This indicates that all teachers have a role to play with the development of writing skills for adolescents in today’s classrooms.

Every three years, since 2000, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures the skill levels of 15-year-old students from 65 countries in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. The PISA assessments measure the knowledge and skills that are deemed to be essential for participation in today’s society. The data obtained from this method of assessment reveal international, national, and provincial results that allow for literacy comparisons on a global level. Canada placed fifth globally, while Manitoba experienced a drop in performance between 2000 and 2009. Despite this drop in performance, Manitoba still had an overall performance level that was equal to that of the OECD average. (Knighton, Brochu, & Gluszynski, 2010). The decrease with the provincial results represents both a warning and an opportunity for educators to consider what changes need to be made with instructional practices in order to improve adolescent literacy levels.

**Contemporary Research on Writing Strategies**

This section of the paper provides information about research that focused on the effectiveness of strategy instruction on writing performance. This review is not exhaustive, but it is meant to provide an overview of specific research studies
that have furnished information about writing strategies. I have chosen to highlight these studies based on the strength and consistency of their effectiveness. There are two main sections to this part of the paper. The first section will review large-scale studies by Graham (2006), Graham and Perin (2007a), and Rogers and Graham (2008). The research that is being reviewed includes meta-analysis studies that used experimental, quasi-experimental, and single subject design research methodologies. The second section will review research studies specific to the Self-Regulated Strategy Development model (SRSD). This research has been included because the SRSD model may be used to teach several of the writing strategies in the final section of the paper.

Large Scale Studies on Writing Strategies

The selected studies had to meet three criteria to be included in the meta-analysis. First, students had to be shown how to use the strategy with modeling. Second, there had to be at least three or more days of strategy instruction. Third, instruction had to progress towards the student being able to use the strategy independently. Students in the studies ranged from grade two to grade twelve. The studies included students with learning disabilities, as well as poor, average, and good writers. Students were taught one or more strategies for planning, revising, or editing of text.

The findings from the group comparison studies and the single-subject design studies revealed that strategy instruction did improve students' writing performance and writing quality. Graham (2006) found with the group comparison studies that the effect size for strategy instruction was 1.15; while group
comparison studies that specifically examined SRSD instruction were found to have an effect size “that was almost double the average effect size” (p. 204).

*Writing Next* (Graham and Perin, 2007a) is a meta-analysis that categorized and analyzed experimental and quasi-experimental data to determine which instructional methods would best support growth in adolescent writing quality. For this study the term adolescent referred to students in 4th through to 12th grade. Graham and Perin (2007a) identified 11 elements to be effective for adolescent writing instruction. (See Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Recommendations from <em>Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Writing Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Summarization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Collaborative Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Specific Product Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Word Processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sentence Combining</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Prewriting</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Inquiry Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Process Writing Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Study of Models</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Writing for Content Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools* (p.11) by S. Graham and D. Perin, 2007a, Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education
Writing quality was the primary outcome of the research being studied. Writing quality was defined “in terms of coherently organized essays, containing well-developed and pertinent ideas, supporting examples and appropriate detail” (Graham, & Perin, 2007a, p.14). The findings from Writing Next (Graham & Perin, 2007a) indicated that teaching students writing strategies (effect size = 0.82) and skills for summarization of text (effect size = 0.82) were both equally effective for bringing about improvements to the quality of adolescents writing.

Rogers and Graham (2008) extended the work found in Writing Next (2007a) by conducting a meta-analysis of single subject design writing intervention research. Eighty-eight single subject design studies were reviewed. Studies were included from research that was conducted at regular, private, and alternative schools. Studies from summer programs, clinics, and residential centers were also included because the researchers were interested in finding out which writing practices would be effective with struggling writers and students with learning disabilities.

Rogers and Graham (2008) also examined the effect of strategy instruction with different writing genres. Analysis was done with story writing and expository writing. Expository writing included persuasive and expository essays. Strategy instruction had a large effect with elements of writing and productivity for both forms of writing. The median and mean PND scores for elements of writing and productivity was 91 % or greater. It was found that maintenance for elements of writing with expository writing had a mean PND score of 89% while maintenance of productivity for stories had a mean PND of 79%. Scores that range between 50%
and 70% reflect questionable effectiveness, while scores between 70% and 90% are moderately effective. Highly effective treatments are reflected by scores that are 90% and above. Both results indicate that writing improves with strategy instruction embedded in instructional practices.

Rogers and Graham (2008) examined five studies to see how effective strategy instruction was for editing. These studies used errors corrected as the outcome measure. There were 32 students in grades 4 to 12 from the five editing intervention studies. Each study had struggling writers with learning disabilities and one study had students that represented the full range of writing abilities that a teacher would have in the regular classroom. The results indicate that teaching an editing strategy would have a large to moderate effect on correcting errors (Rogers & Graham, 2008).

Research on Self-Regulated Strategy Development

Next I will review studies that investigate the Self Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) procedures. De La Paz and Graham (2002) examined the effectiveness of instructional strategies and the impact that they have on the writing performance of students in the regular classroom. The student population being studied by De La Paz and Graham (2002) was very specific, and the focus was on middle school students. The participants in this study included 58 seventh and eighth grade students. Students were taught strategies for planning, drafting, and revising an expository essay for persuasion using the self-regulated strategy model. After receiving instruction, 97% of the students in the experimental group were
“more complete, elaborate, and hierarchical” (p. 696) with their pre-writing plans. Effect sizes for the writing measures were quite strong (effect size = 1.0) on the post treatment. Over all De La Paz and Graham (2002) found that students in the treatment condition produced essays that were longer, used mature vocabulary, and were qualitatively better.

Strategy instruction has been found to be effective for a large percentage of students who have a learning disability (De La Paz & Graham, 1997a). According to Baker, Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Apichatabutra, and Doabler (2009), writing provides students with an opportunity to express their feelings, knowledge, and opinion on a particular topic. However, “students with writing difficulties often struggle with the planning, composting, and revising skills required for effective writing” (Mason, Harris, & Graham, 2011, p 20). Students with a learning disability may also have difficulty with the planning, writing, and revising of an essay. Self-regulated strategy development will offer support to these students because it “targets writing skills that involve brainstorming, semantic mapping, generating writing content, setting goals, and revision” (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005, p 77).

A study conducted by Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke (2005) assessed both the quality and quantity of writing, of fifteen high school students. Students in this study were identified as having a learning disability and students IQ scores ranged between 80 and 115. The students were also identified as being two years below grade level in one or more academic classes. Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, (2005) evaluated the students writing based on the number of words written and on the
quality of the writing. Students received five writing lessons that were 20-25 minutes long during each 50- minute class.

The results from the study revealed that word production and the quality and quantity of writing did improve after receiving instruction using the self-regulated strategy development approach. It was found that most of the improvements occurred in word production while the quality measure had some improvement it was not as significant. Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke (2005) suggested a more sensitive measure of progress could have been used to score the quality of writing. Scoring the number of number of thought units might have brought different results.

Graham and Harris (2008) did note that for students that used the SRSD strategy the average effect size for improvement in the quality of writing for students with learning disabilities was 1.14. Previous research studies have documented that using Self Regulated Strategy Development has led to increases in writing quality, and self- regulation skills for students of different ability levels, but especially students with learning disabilities (Harris & Graham, 2007; Graham & Perin 2007a)

The Self- Regulated Strategy Development Model

A strategy is a conscious set of actions that one uses in order to achieve a goal. (Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998). Strategies also involve the procedural knowledge or the steps needed to achieve the writing goal. A specific purpose and procedure or plan needs to be followed in order to achieve the goal (Graham &
According to Chalk, Hagen-Burke & Burke (2005), strategy instruction “engages students with tasks requiring active understanding” (p.77).

The teaching of writing strategies helps writers in several ways. First, the strategy provides direction for a specific course of action needed in order to complete the writing assignment. The concreteness of the strategy allows students to follow an organized pattern. Second, the teaching of writing strategies makes the mental process involved in writing transparent. When teachers model the strategy, they make the mental actions associated with writing observable by demonstrating verbally and visually how to use the particular strategy. A third benefit for students is that they learn new ways to generate and organize ideas, and to plan and revise material that has already been written. The ability to help adolescents achieve and improve their writing performance will hopefully enhance their self-efficacy and motivation for writing (Graham & Harris, 2008).

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is a scientifically validated model that can help students with the writing process (Graham & Harris 2008; Graham & Perin 2007a; Harris & Graham, 2007; Rogers & Graham, 2008). Self-Regulation refers to thoughts, feelings, and actions that people use to obtain goals (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994). Self-regulation skills include goal setting, self-monitoring, self-recording, self-assessment and self-reinforcement to manage their use of writing strategies for the writing task (Chalk, Hagen-Burke & Burke, 2005; Graham & Harris, 2008). These strategies help students manage their writing behavior, during planning, drafting and revising (Graham 2006, Graham & Harris, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007a, Graham & Perin, 2007b).
The instructional stages of the self-regulated strategy model are flexible and may be combined, reordered, or modified to meet instructional needs. According to Graham and Harris (2008) and Harris and Graham (2007), the six steps outlined below are meant to be a guideline for teaching a strategy:

*Step 1: Develop background knowledge:* Students are taught the information and skills needed to understand the self-regulated procedures and the writing strategy.

*Step 2: Discuss It:* Current writing performance and the target writing strategy are discussed. How and when to use the strategy are discussed.

*Step 3: Model It:* The teacher models how to use the strategy with a think aloud approach and goal setting approaches may also be done at this step.

*Step 4: Memorize It:* A mnemonic for remembering the strategy may be used to support memorization.

*Step 5: Support It:* Students practice using the writing strategy and self-regulation processes. Students may receive help from the teacher, strategy reminder sheets, or other students. Help may include direct assistance and corrective feedback.

*Step 6: Independent Performance:* Students use the writing strategy independently.

**Evidence Based Writing Strategies**

The writing strategies that are being suggested in this section may be used in Language Arts, or any of the content area subjects. The strategies may be applied in a broad or a specific a manner depending on class or student need. There may be crossover into different genres of writing depending on which strategy is being used to facilitate the writing process; the strategies are flexible and may be used with the
writing of narrative and expository text. With the implementation of these strategies, writing development is supported in the following areas: paragraph writing, organizational skills, goal setting, summarization and revising skills. Each strategy is designed to encompass the pre-writing, drafting and revising processes. I will be outlining three strategies for improving writing quality: the PLEASE Strategy, the SUMMARY-WRITING Strategy, and the CDO REVISING Strategy.

**Paragraph Writing: The PLEASE Strategy**

The PLEASE strategy is a structured formula for writing a paragraph/paragraphs that have a main idea and supportive details. The PLEASE mnemonic stands for Pick, List, Evaluate, Activate, Supply and End. Research on this strategy suggests that it has a positive effect on paragraph writing skills (Welch, 1992). Welch (1992) examined paragraph writing with the PLEASE STRATEGY for students who had mild learning disabilities. The students were identified as having a learning disability but had average intelligence scores that ranged from 74 to 109. The study investigated sixth grade students’ knowledge about: prewriting, composition, revision and parts of a paragraph. Seven students participated in this study and were taught the PLEASE strategy three times a week in a resource room setting. Each teaching session lasted thirty minutes and the study was conducted for approximately 20 weeks (Welch, 1992).

Results from the study revealed that the experimental treatment was effective for improving prewriting, composition, revision and parts of a paragraph. Welch (1992) also noted that students “attitudes towards writing and writing
instruction improved significantly following the experimental treatment” (p.119).

Graham and Harris (2008) noted that students that were taught the PLEASE strategy experienced positive effects on paragraph knowledge (reported effect size = 0.98), writing quality and the writing of more complete paragraphs experienced a moderate effect (reported effect size = 0.51). Moderate effects (reported effect size = 0.47) were experienced with students feeling “more positive about their paragraph-writing ability” (Graham & Harris, 2008, p. 45).

Teaching the PLEASE Strategy

PLEASE is a mnemonic that reminds students to carry out the following steps:

1- **Pick:** Students need to pick a topic, an audience, a writing goal and type of paragraph or paragraphs they plan to write. They may write for informational, compare/contrast, and or cause and effect purposes. Students need to select one to three vocabulary words for each paragraph.

2- **List:** Students generate a list of ideas that they might use in the paragraph.

3- **Evaluate:** Students evaluate their list to see if it is complete and contains relevant ideas. New ideas or vocabulary words may be added.

4- **Activate:** Students activate the paragraph by creating a topic sentence that introduces the reader to the topic.

5- **Supply:** Using their list of ideas, students design sentences that support their topic sentence.

6- **End:** Students end with a concluding sentence. Editing of the paragraph occurs. Students correct any errors in word order, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and overall appearances. Students record whether they
have met their writing goal. A brief explanation about what they did to achieve, or why they did not achieve the writing goal may be recorded on the back of the strategy sheet.

**PLEASE Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pick a topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Vocabulary Words:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Goal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Paragraph: Informational/ Compare and Contrast/ Cause and Effect/ Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List Ideas: (the number of ideas will vary depending on the assignment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate ideas: (decide and number which order you want the ideas to appear in the paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activate: By providing a topic sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply: Ideas that support the topic sentence, underline the key vocabulary words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End/ Concluding Sentence:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary Writing: The SUMMARY – WRITING Strategy

The SUMMARY- WRITING strategy is meant to teach students how to write a concise and accurate summary (Nelson, Smith, & Dodd, 1992). Graham and Hebert (2010) found that comprehension of science, social studies, and language arts texts is improved when students write summaries of the text (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Graham and Perin (2007a) reported that teaching students strategies for summarization did provide a positive effect (reported effect size = 0.82) on their ability to write good summaries. Writing a strong summary requires that students learn what to keep, what to eliminate, and how to write a short synopsis of the important information (Graham & Perin, 2007a). Writing summaries will help students learn how to write more precisely. The SUMMARY- WRITING strategy will also help students organize their thinking in a reflective manner and support planning in a thoughtful manner (Graham & Harris, 2008).

Nelson, Smith, and Dodd (1992) conducted a study that examined the effects of learning a summary strategy on the comprehension of science text. The study was conducted with five elementary- age special education students that were attending a summer remedial program. Two areas of performance were assessed, completeness of the written summaries and reading comprehension. The summary skills were introduced with both group and individual reading settings. The results from the study revealed that the percentage of important information included in the written summaries rose from 45% to 98 % after students learned how to use
this strategy. Reading comprehension scores improved by 100% (Nelson et al, 1992).

**Teaching the Summary-Writing Strategy**

1. It is important that students have the opportunity to apply this strategy broadly with a variety of texts in all subject areas. The teacher needs to explicitly teach what is meant by the term summarization.

2. The teacher reads aloud to the class from a Science, Social Studies, or Language Arts text. Students listen for key words or information that they believe to be important.

3. After the reading as a class they discuss and record the vocabulary and concepts that are important to the passage that was just read.

4. Have the students read the text with a partner.

5. The students identify and record the main idea and important vocabulary words. Students write down the important points directly underneath the main idea. Next, students scan the text again to see if any important information or vocabulary words were missed during the first reading. The main idea and important points are revised if needed.

6. A plan for writing the summary is developed. This may be done whole class and later on as a small group or partner activity. The students write together to form a topic sentence that represents the main idea. Next they number which information will go first, second, third, and so on. The students look through and decide if any of the recorded ideas are missing or if any
unimportant information should be taken out of the summary. Important vocabulary words are underlined.

7. Students use the plan to write the summary.

**SUMMARY – WRITING Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1. What is the main idea?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2. What are the important points that provide information about the main idea?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What are the important vocabulary words that should be include in the summary to support the main idea?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3. Re-read the text to make sure all the important information has been included. Record any important information that is needed.</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4. Write a topic sentence for the summary. Write supporting details with key vocabulary words that support the main topic.</th>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Step 5. Revise and Self-Edit or peer edit for clarity of ideas, and conventions. Re-write the summary, if there is anything that is unclear or needs to be added.</th>
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</table>

The CDO REVISING Strategy

Revising is an important part of writing, but it is not an easy task to accomplish. According to Schneider (2003) many teachers find that revision is a challenge for a large number of students. Yet, revision may be viewed as “the most important part of the composing process” (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006, p. 282). Revising may be used to help writers discover a mismatch between what has actually been written compared to what their intentions were, or it may be used to simplify a part of the text that the writer might see as being too complicated for the intended audience (Graham & Harris, 2008).

The revision process allows the writer to adapt the text to enhance the clarity of their message (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). The writer may decide to revise for different purposes; they may add, rewrite, delete, or move text around in order to create meaning (Graham & Harris, 2008). The CDO revising strategy will provide a framework to assist students with the revising process. The acronym CDO represents: Compare, Diagnose, and Operate. Compare refers to identifying where a revision is needed. Diagnose determines the problem, and the student needs to consider the substance of what has been written not just the form of the text. Operate refers to the specific steps taken to revise the text.

Graham (1997) conducted a study that examined the role of executive control and revising difficulties that students experienced with writing. Twelve students from the fifth and sixth grade participated in this study. Results from this study (Graham, 1997) revealed that 83% of the students indicated that the CDO strategy made revising easier by providing help with one or more of the revising
processes. Ten out of the twelve (83%) students thought that the strategy made their papers better because the strategy helped them to make needed revisions. Graham and Harris (2008) noted that the CDO strategy, which was researched by Graham (1997), generated the following effect sizes for revisions involving substance (effect size = 0.38) mechanics (effect size= 0.42) and substantive revisions (effects size = 0.83). It was also noted that students revised more frequently (Graham & Harris 2008).

_Instructional Suggestions_

The CDO strategy is composed of four steps. First, students need to read and evaluate each sentence in the piece of writing. Second, students need to diagnose each sentence based on six possible options, as outlined on the CDO REVISING strategy sheet. Third, one of four options is selected as a plan of action for the revision. Last, the student revises the original piece of writing.

_Teaching the CDO REVISING Strategy_

1. When first introducing students to this strategy the teacher discusses the importance of revising. The essential question would be: Why would we want to revise a piece of writing?

2. Next the teacher explains and models the four steps of the strategy with pieces of writing from different subject areas.

3. As a whole class the teacher asks students to help with the selection of appropriate diagnosis evaluations on each sentence for a piece of writing. Next students select which plan of action would work best for the revision process.
4. Working in small groups of two or three, students are given a short piece of content area writing. As a group they work through the CDO strategy to demonstrate that they understand the process. The teacher provides help as needed.

5. Next the teacher has students work individually with this strategy to see if all steps have been learned at an independent level. Students may refer to the CDO REVISING strategy sheet as they work through each step.

**CDO REVISING Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1. <strong>Compose:</strong> Read each sentence in the paper.</th>
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</table>
| Step 2. **Diagnose**  
Write the corresponding letter beside each sentence to signify any changes that are needed.  
a) This doesn’t sound right.  
b) This is not what I meant to say.  
c) This is not useful information for this paper.  
d) This is useful information for this paper.  
e) The reader may not understand this part.  
f) The reader may not understand this vocabulary word. The reader may not believe this part. |
| Step 3. **Operate:** Select a plan of action.  
h) Rewrite  
i) Add more  
j) Include an example  
k) Leave this part out  
l) Change the wording  
m) Add Key Vocabulary Words |
| Step 4. **Operate:** Make your revisions |

Concluding Remarks

During the past decade the literacy skills of adolescents have come to the forefront as being less than adequate to meet the demands of today's work force (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Graham, & Hebert, 2010; Graham, & Perin, 2007a). The importance of literacy has been noted globally, and thus explored at a national and international level (Knighton, Brochu & Gluszynski, 2010). The results from large-scale studies such as Reading Next (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) and Writing Next (Graham & Perin, 2007a) indicate that more needs to be done in the area of strategy instruction for middle and senior high students. Writing has often been overlooked as an important tool for improving literacy. (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Current research supports the importance of writing on many levels (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Graham & Hebert, 2010; Graham & Perin, 2007a). Writing has been connected with improving students reading ability, enhancing comprehension, and supporting cognitive processes for learning. This paper has addressed adolescent writing concerns; provided information related to writing and the self-regulated strategy development model. The PLEASE, SUMMARY WRITING, and CDO strategies are supported by current research as being effective instructional strategies for the diversity of students that are in today's classrooms.
References


