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Steve Graham

Steve Graham is the Warner Professor in the Division of Leadership and Innovation at Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. For over 30 years, he has studied how writing develops, how to teach it effectively, and how it can be used to support reading and learning.

Steve is the current editor of the *Journal of Educational Psychology*. He is the co-author of the *Handbook of Writing Research*, *Handbook of Learning Disabilities*, *APA Handbook of Educational Psychology*, *Writing Better*, *Powerful Writing Strategies for all Students*, and *Making the Writing Process Work*. He is also the author of three influential Carnegie Corporation reports: *Writing Next*, *Writing to Read*, and *Informing Writing*.

Karen R. Harris

Karen R. Harris is the Warner Professor of Education at Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. For over 30 years, she has studied writing and self-regulation in grades K–12.

Karen developed and leads refinement of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model of strategies instruction in writing, which has been deemed an evidence-based practice by four independent groups. She is co-author or co-editor of several books, including *Powerful Writing Strategies for All Students*; *Writing Better*; and the *Handbook of Research in Learning Disabilities*, as well as over 200 peer-reviewed publications.

Conclusion

To create an effective writing program, we must establish a writing environment in which young, developing writers can flourish and grow. In such an environment, children have ample opportunities to write; because if students in the elementary grades are to grow as writers, they must write.

There is no magic number for how many minutes or hours children should write each day, but we recommend that children in the elementary grades spend *at least* 30 minutes per day writing (and the same amount of time being taught to write). Simply increasing how much time students spend writing by 15 minutes, three times a week can have positive effects. For the average child, this 15-minute increase results in a 12-percentile point jump in writing quality. This positive impact extends beyond writing, as the average student who writes more can make a 14-percentile point jump on standardized measures of reading comprehension. Both writing and reading improve!

What children write matters as much as how often they write. Children need to write for real purposes and for many different audiences. As they begin new writing assignments, they should first identify why they are writing and for whom. They should write short pieces and longer pieces, learning how to use writing to accomplish specific goals. They should engage in a variety of different types of writing, including writing to inform, learn, persuade, entertain, communicate, chronicle, and contemplate.

How children grow and what they think about writing depends greatly on the environment in which they learn to write. An average child working in a pleasant and motivating writing environment, such as Writing Workshop, can make a 16-percentile point jump in writing quality.

Teachers who create classrooms that are supportive of writing tend to

- Foster a stimulating mood during writing time

- Communicate their excitement and demonstrate to students that they enjoy writing and teaching about writing

- Encourage students to try hard, believe what they are learning will help them be better writers, and attribute success to effort

- Make students' writing visible by asking them to share it with others, displaying it on the wall, and/or publishing it in anthologies, books, and other classroom collections

- Build routines that encourage students to plan, draft, revise, and edit their texts

- Develop classroom practices that allow students to share their writing in progress and completed papers with peers

- Promote positive interactions among students as they help each other plan, draft, and revise their papers

- Set high but realistic goals for their students' writing, and encourage them to exceed previous efforts and achievements

Offer personalized assistance and feedback as well as brief instructional lessons as needed
Adapt writing assignments and instruction that connect with their students' interests and needs

Allow students to modify some writing assignments to meet their interests

Keep students engaged by involving them in thoughtful activities (e.g., discussing ideas for their papers) versus less thoughtful activities (e.g., completing a worksheet)

Encourage students to act in a self-regulated fashion, doing as much as they can on their own (e.g., provide a hint on how to spell a word versus spelling it for the student)

Support

Children are more likely to enjoy writing and produce their best writing when their teacher supports their efforts. They especially need to feel supported as they work through the demanding processes of planning, gathering, and organizing possible writing ideas, evaluating these ideas and the resulting text, and making revisions.

Positive teacher support will:

Provide students with specific goals

Too often, children are asked to complete vague or poorly defined writing tasks. Setting goals helps to define the task. For example, if students are asked to defend an opinion in their paper, the goal might be to specifically state what they believe and provide at least two reasons to support their opinions, providing an explanation for each reason. Similarly, if you want students to add new information to a piece, give them a goal to add three new ideas. Students who are given goals show a 28-percentile point jump.

