Introduction

Research Questions
1. What is the effect of SRSD instruction for college entrance test writing on the quality of students’ advanced plans, overall ACT writing scores, number of argumentative essay elements, number of words written, and number of transition words?
2. Did SRSD instructed students view this instruction as valuable?

Rationale
- Writing is an important skill for college.
- Despite the importance of writing, mastery of this skill presents a challenge for many students.
- Colleges currently view writing as a gateway skill to college entrance.

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD)
- SRSD helps students develop powerful writing strategies and critical self-regulation strategies for the writing process.
- SRSD self-regulation strategies include goal setting, self-instructions, self-reinforcement, and self-monitoring.
- SRSD Six Recursive Stages
  1. Developing and activating background knowledge
  2. Discussing the strategy
  3. Modeling the strategy
  4. Memorizing the strategy
  5. Supporting the strategy
  6. Performing the strategy independently

Instructional Strategy Used in this Study
- HIT SONGS® is a strategy for the argumentative essay writing task on the ACT exam.

Methods
- Design: multiple baseline across participants
- School: Catholic college preparatory in the Phoenix metropolitan area
- Participant Selection: (a) recommendation by English teacher, (b) produced less than 8 argumentative elements on pretest, and (c) scored below 25th percentile on WAT-III essay
- Participants
  - Dominic: 10th grade, male, Hispanic
  - Gabrielle: 10th grade, female, Hispanic
  - Kevin: 10th grade, male, Caucasian
  - Mark: 10th grade, male, Caucasian
- Intervention
  - Argumentative writing strategy represented by the mnemonic HIT SONGS®
  - Strategy was designed to help students successfully complete the newly modified ACT writing test (ACT, Inc., 2015b) and improve their scores on this assessment.
  - Self-regulation strategies were taught to students as they learned to use the strategy.
  - The argumentative writing and self-regulation strategies were taught using the SRSD instructional model which includes six stages of instruction (Harris & Graham, 2014).
- Fidelity
  - Instructor checklist and observation of over one-third of the lessons.
  - Treatment fidelity across each of the lessons was 100%.
- Writing Prompts and Scoring
  - Prompts were from practice ACT writing tests designed to be relevant to adolescents.
  - All essays were scored independently by the first author and a trained rater.
  - Essays were scored for planning quality, overall ACT score, number of argumentative elements, number of words written, and number of transition words utilized.

Results
Percent of Non-Overlapping Data Across Students
- Elements: Post-instruction 100%, Maintenance 100%
- Planning: Post-instruction 92%, Maintenance 100%
- ACT Writing Scores: Post-instruction 100%, Maintenance 100%
- Length: Post-instruction 75%, Maintenance 75%
- Transition Words: Post-instruction 75%, Maintenance 75%

Treatment Fidelity
- Treatment fidelity was 100% across all students
- 36% to 42% of the lessons for each student were observed

Social Validity
- All of the students enjoyed learning the strategy HIT SONGS® and felt that it helped them improve their ACT essay writing.
  - “The strategy helped me organize my paper better. It really helped me focus on those parts more. I would skip the thesis before. My body paragraphs are now more organized.” - Gabrielle
  - “It was fun!” - Mark

Discussion
Students obtained initial competence in writing argumentative essays for the ACT exam.
- Students produced higher quality plans, enhanced their ACT score, and increased the number of argumentative essay elements, words, and transition words.
The results of this study
- Add to the evidence supporting that SRSD instruction is effective for less skilled high school writers.
- Reveal that struggling writers can make meaningful improvements on their ACT essay writing abilities, when provided with test preparation on writing an argumentative essay for the ACT, through strategies instruction.

Future Research
- Randomized control trial with larger sample size
- Students with disabilities
- Small group instruction
- Students at a variety of grade levels (10th, 11th, and 12th)
- Students from diverse populations
- Strategy taught by classroom teachers

For More Information
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