Strategies to get reluctant writers writing
(and comprehending better, too!)
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Writing
• Reading and writing not hard-wired
  – spoken language probably dates back to changed larynx of homo sapien (Upper Paleolithic, about 50,000 years ago)
  – written language c. 3200 BC

Writing
• Demands integration of the most processes of any communication act
Writing process
1. Visualize
   ➢ Right side of brain

Writing process
2. Change picture into words
   ➢ Cross corpus callosum to left side of brain

Writing process
3. Change picture into more words
   ➢ Cross corpus callosum back to right side, get more detail, cross back to left side
Writing process
4. Change picture into more detailed words
   - keep running back and forth across corpus callosum until teacher is happy

Writing process
5. Encode words
   - oral → written
   - auditory loop → phonemic awareness → phonics → symbol-imagery

Writing process
6. Make hand write words
   - visual/motor integration while keeping rest of encoded words in mind
   - working memory
Writing process
7. Compare written words to symbol imagery and/or phonics knowledge
   - visual working memory, auditory working memory

8. Correct written words
   - visual/motor integration, working memory

9. Repeat
Reluctant writers
No wonder some kids are reluctant to write!

Aaaah!

Don't make me!

I hate writing!

Reluctant writers

But...
Who are these reluctant writers?

Aaaah!

Don't make me!

I hate writing!

But...
Who are these reluctant writers?

Reluctant writers

Dyslexia

Expressive language disorders

Visual-motor difficulties

ASD
Reluctant writers

Dyslexia

- Most commonly associated with weak phonemic awareness
- Biggest difficulty is encoding ie, spelling

Dyslexia

- Oral language often very strong
- Tells a great story
- Writes the shortest version possible
- With the simplest words
Dyslexia: Remediation

- Explicit, systematic, multi-sensory phonics instruction
- Orton-Gillingham based
- Reading/Writing/Spelling interconnection
- At independent level

Dyslexia: Remediation

- Use the Writing Process
  - brainstorm/organizer
  - rough draft: DON’T WORRY ABOUT SPELLING!
  - Revisions: still don’t worry about spelling
  - Final draft: have student correct a few words

Dyslexia: Accommodations

Remediation & Accommodation:

- Simultaneous, parallel paths
- Not either/or
### Dyslexia: Accommodations

- Cannot afford to wait until they can write fluently at grade level to
  - practice sentence structure
  - develop their voice
  - improve story telling and essay writing
  - access higher order thinking skills

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### Dyslexia: Accommodations

- Remediation
  - At the student's *independent* performance level
  - Filling in the gaps in basic skills

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### Dyslexia: Accommodations

- Accommodation
  - At the student's *cognitive* level (e.g., oral language level)
  - Access to grade-level (or cognitive-level) appropriate content
  - Access to higher order thinking skills
Dyslexia: Accommodations

• Accommodation is
  – Not cheating!!!!
  – About fair and equal access
  – Ramp into the content
  – Absolutely necessary

Dyslexia: Accommodations

• Task analysis & discrete goals
• Validity of tests and tasks

Dyslexia: Accommodations

• Effective accommodations
  – need to be taught explicitly
  – some are disposable crutches
  – some are lifetime supports
  – integrate throughout classes
  – integrate at home

Big happy Golden retriever
Dyslexia: Accommodations

- Dictation

http://www.techweekeurope.co.uk/mobility/mobile-apps/10-best-dictation-apps-102985

- Extended time
- Modified homework load (time-based versus length-based)
- No penalty for spelling or punctuation errors except for final drafts

Dyslexia: Accommodations

FAIR does not mean Same
Reluctant writers

Visual-motor difficulties

- Make hand write words
- Physical act of writing is difficult
- Problem in the hand, in perception, or in their coordination

Visual-motor difficulties

- Wrap-around pencil grip
- Starting letters from the bottom
- Looping letters backwards
- Loop the loop letters
Visual-motor difficulties
• Refer to an OT
• Handwriting Without Tears
• Dictation
• Typing

Reluctant writers

Expressive language difficulties
• Word finding difficulty
  – affects oral as well as written language
• Receptive vocabulary higher than expressive
• Low rapid naming scores
• Tip of the tongue phenomenon

Big happy golden retriever
Expressive language difficulties

- Refer to a Speech/Language Pathologist
- Overlearn material
  - Through multiple pathways
- Develop metacognitive strategies
- Develop oral language
  - see ASD remediations
- Rave-O

Expressive language difficulties

- Guess Who
- Spot It
- Headbanz
Reluctant writers

ASD
• Biggest communication challenge is connecting pictures to words and vice versa

ASD
**Highly structured, systematic program**

- Builds neural bridge between left and right hemispheres
- Builds connections between words and pictures
• Use Structure Words to guide visualizing
• Create picture together
• Describe picture based on
  – a picture
  – a word
  – sentences
  – paragraphs

• In pure VV, keep with it the whole session
• In my practice and for my taste, need to move on after about 20 minutes (one or two pictures or one or two paragraphs)

• Golden rule:
  Always call it a game!
Chickens, Minecraft, Angry Birds

**ASD**

**Pander, Pander, Pander**

Guess which one? supplies

- 20-30 small pictures
  - playing cards, calendar previews on back, etc
- Notecards

**ASD**

**Games Galore**

Guess which one? procedure

- Each person secretly picks one picture
- Describes it with as much detail as possible
- Reads description to other player
- Other player guesses which one
- Remember to pander!
Guess which one? procedure

- As student reads their description
  - think-aloud sorting
  - make sure to be confused if unclear
- As you read your description
  - model good writing
  - ask student what gave it away

Guess which one? Alternatives

- Emotion cards
  - especially good if student weak on socio-emotional skills
  - can add in brief discussion of “plot”
- Figurines
- Target vocabulary concepts

Folder Game supplies

- Scene Builders
  - personal favorite: Mudpuppy
  - Magnetic Figures
- Empty file folder
Folder Game procedures
• 1st person starts building scene
• Describes in detail as works
• 2nd person tries to duplicate scene
  – Asks clarifying questions
• The Big Reveal! + Debrief

Other Folder Games
• Drawing
• Pattern blocks
• Legos
• Remember to pander!

Play then record
• Puppets
• Figurines
• Take notes as necessary
• Pander!
Forced-Choice Storytelling

- Some kids (many with dyslexia or ADHD) LOVE open-ended writing assignments
- The more open-ended, the better

Forced-Choice Storytelling

- Other kids FREAK OUT!
- Too open-ended
- Need structure
- Need prompts for visualizing

Forced-Choice Storytelling

- Ask series of either/or questions
- Cover story elements
- Stop when you see light bulb
Forced-Choice Storytelling
• Do you want to write
  • something true or made up?
  • human or animal characters?
  • boy or girl main character?
  • realistic or fantasy?

Forced-Choice Storytelling
• Do you want to write
  • funny, sad, scary?
  • where is it?
  • what is the problem?
  • the solution?

Forced-Choice Storytelling
• Take notes for student if they need it
• Use graphic organizer if they need it
• Remember to pander!
Everyone
Authentic need to write

• Birthday cards
• Cards to absent friends, parent, sibling
• Exciting current event
  – Offer as choice rather than assign
• Have cool stationery and fancy pens

The big picture

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.

Maya Angelou