

The Sticky Note Prewriting Strategy

Research indicates that students with learning difficulties often resort to “knowledge telling” where they draw a relevant idea from memory, write it down, and then use this idea to stimulate the next sentence (Graham & Harris, 2007; Brown et al, 1983). This often results in a stream-of-consciousness style of writing which lacks focus and organization. Students with writing difficulties typically spend less than one minute planning (Englert et al, 1988), and less than 6 minutes writing (Thomas et al, 1987). These students have difficulty sustaining thought on a given topic (Thomas et al, 1987). They often produce short passages with little detail or elaboration, and once an idea is generated, they are reluctant to discard it (Graham et al, 1991).



The Sticky Note Prewriting Strategy is a way to help students plan and organize their ideas in advance of writing. It is also a strategy that can wean students away from full scribing to an adult. Using this strategy, students are encouraged to dictate ideas to an adult, who writes the key phrase or sentence starter on a mini sticky note (one idea per sticky note).

Once sufficient ideas have been generated (topic introductions, details, closing statements, etc.), the sticky notes are arranged in order on a piece of paper. Students then use the sticky note outline to write their paragraph(s).

Teachers should use the following steps to promote this strategy:

- Discuss the importance of prewriting.
- Describe the use of sticky notes to generate and organize ideas.
- The teacher models the use of the sticky note strategy using her own ideas on a topic.
- The student practices the use of the Sticky Note Prewriting Strategy with a teacher, using a familiar, non-academic topic.
- Over time, reduce the amount of scaffolded support, by writing only key words on the sticky notes rather than phrases or partial sentences.
- Overtime, have the student write his ideas on the sticky notes, but continue to help the student organize his notes.
- Monitor the student's use of this strategy and gradually reduce organizational support once the student can demonstrate improved prewriting skills.

References:

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