

# **The Effects of Teaching Writing Strategies to Students with Mild Disabilities**

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# **Writing Characteristics of Students w/ Mild Disabilities**

**Disorganized**

**Low self-esteem**

**High frustration level**

**Low motivation**

**Unaware of strategies**

**(Anderson-Inman, 1999; Bridges, 1996; Okolo, 2000; Strum & Rankin, 1997;  
Zhang, 2000)**

# Writing Strategies

## ● Students with mild disabilities:

- Have limited number of efficient strategies.

(Bridges, 1996; De La Paz & Graham, 1997, Outhred, 1989)

- Have great difficulty with the prewriting phase and rewriting phases.

(De La Pas & Graham, 1994; Hunt-Berg, Rankin, Beukelman, 1994)

# Technology Usage

- **Teachers report that technology usage has positive influence upon student motivation and attitudes.**

(Bangert-Drowns, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 1991, & Lewis, 2000)

- **Technology allows users to develop compensatory skills.**

(Bowser & Reed, 2000; Bryant & Bryant, 1998)

- **Written products can be produced in a more efficient and attractive manner.**

(Graham, Harris, & Larsen, 2001; MacArthur, 1996)

# Attitudes

- **Amplify person's positive or negative responses** (Gagne', Briggs & Wager, 1988).
- **Dictate the extent students are willing to engage in academic tasks** (Anderson-Inman, 1999).

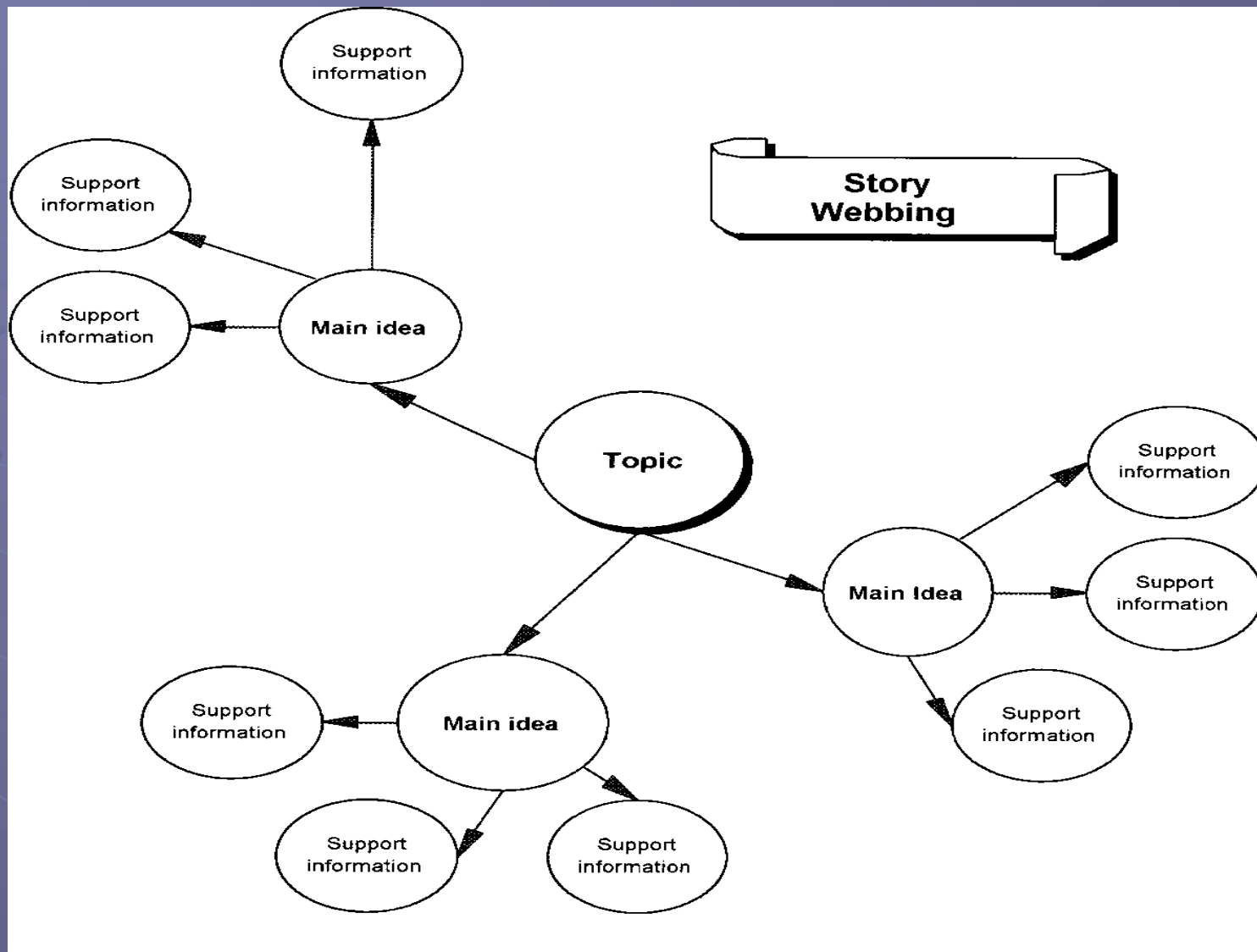
# Research Project

- 4 weeks (summer)
- $n = 18$  (completed study)
- 7<sup>th</sup> (2) and 8<sup>th</sup> (16) graders urban schools
- Mild disabilities - identified by district
- Strategy instruction
- Computer usage daily
- Quantitative and qualitative data

# Materials and Software

- Story webbing
- Visual thinking software -- *Inspiration*
- Word Processing -- *Microsoft Word*
- Keyboarding -- *Type to Learn*

## Story Webbing



# Visual Thinking Software

● ***Inspiration*** 6-12 [www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)

- Brainstorm ideas
- Organize information
- Diagram format
- Outline format

# When Students are taught Story Webbing and to Use Visual Thinking Software

- WP increase quality up to 24%
- WP increase quantity up to 57%
- HW increase in quality is consistent
- HW no increase in quantity
- Consistent gain across modalities for quality  
(24%-26% story construction)

# Student Interview Questionnaire

## ● Attitudes about Writing

- Elaborated on responses at posttest
- Focus on handwriting and looks at pretest at posttest 2 students mentioned quality of writing

## ● Computer Usage

- Modest improvements in attitudes
- Increased knowledge regarding features

## ● Writing Strategies

- 1 vs. 3 mentioned strategies
- 2 at posttest mentioned story webbing w/difficulty
- more discussion of strategies at posttest

# Instructor Observation Logs

## ● Attitudes about Writing

- Less resistance to writing
- Less negative comments and behaviors

## ● Computer Usage

- Limitations of Keyboarding skills apparent
- Keyboarding much improved
- Computers incentive for many

## ● Writing Strategies

- More planning observed except during testing
- Talk about helpfulness of planning

# Students' Self Perceptions

- SSD in attitudes about writing
- SSD in writing strategies
- Increase in positive responses regarding computer usage but not SSD
- 1/3 continued to express negative feelings at posttest
- 55% say they should plan before writing

# Conclusions

- **Writing Strategies:**

- write everyday,
- select variety of writing strategies,
- reach level of automaticity.

- **Technology usage:**

- teach and use full range of technology tools.
- keyboarding skills practice

- **Attitudes:**

- utilize motivators,
- strive for positive environment.