Instructor’s Guide for Writing

Topic Area: Instruction

Module: Writing

Case Study: Up, Up, and Away: Using Planning Strategies to Improve Writing Performance

Summary: By teaching her students to make a plan for their writing, Katye Brennan hoped to help her fifth grade students improve their Language Arts skills. Since they would spend considerable time planning what they would write, students of all abilities were able to gain confidence and produce work of greater quality.

Characters and Roles:
- Katye Brennan, fifth grade teacher
- Justin Swenson, fifth grade student with a learning disability
- Dan Miller, fourth grade teacher
- Meg Miller, special education facilitator

Tools:
- Adaptations
- Planning Strategy
- SPACE LAUNCH

Artifacts:
- SPACE LAUNCH Mnemonic Handout
- Planning Sheet
- PowerPoint on SPACE LAUNCH
- Writing Pretest
- Writing Posttest

Glossary Terms:
- Learning Disability
- Adaptations
- IEP
- Mnemonic
- Planning Strategy
- SPACE LAUNCH

Web Sites:
- http://ericec.org/faq/writskls.html
Discussion Points:

- What challenges might a student with a learning disability experience related to writing?
- What strategies are effective in teaching students at various levels about the writing process?
- What are the pros and cons of implementing a Writers’ Workshop structure in an upper elementary classroom?
- What is the importance of spelling in the writing process?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using mnemonics?

Activities:

- Invite a classroom teacher who has had success teaching the writing process to present a staff development session to teachers in the school.
- Brainstorm strategies teachers could use to assist students with special needs to improve writing skills.
- Simplify the SPACE LAUNCH strategy for primary students.
- Share examples of students’ writing that is a result of using SPACE LAUNCH.

Reflective Question: Scene 2, Question 3 – When students have adaptations that allow for extra time to complete assignments, when should that time be provided? A student who needs additional time to complete assignments should not be penalized for the adaptation. The student should not miss instructional time or recess. He/she and the teacher should discuss and agree on when the time could be provided. Completing an assignment before or after school, during a study hall, or at home are possibilities that could be explored.

Connections:

- Topic Area: Instruction; Module: Instructional Accommodations