



**Why is writing so darn hard?**

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**Where are we going?**

- 1. Student perspectives about writing**
- 2. A model of text production** (Singer & Bashir, 2004)
- 3. The role of language in written language**
- 4. Implications for assessment, instruction, and intervention**




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**Student perspectives**



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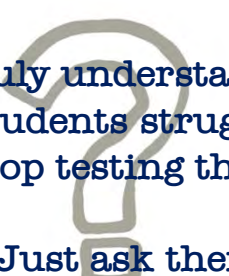



**Why did full legal and civil rights for African Americans finally come to be established only in the late 1960s, instead of earlier in the century, or even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? What were the political, economic, and cultural preconditions for this breakthrough? To what extent were African Americans able to affect the process, and for what reasons did other Americans help them?**



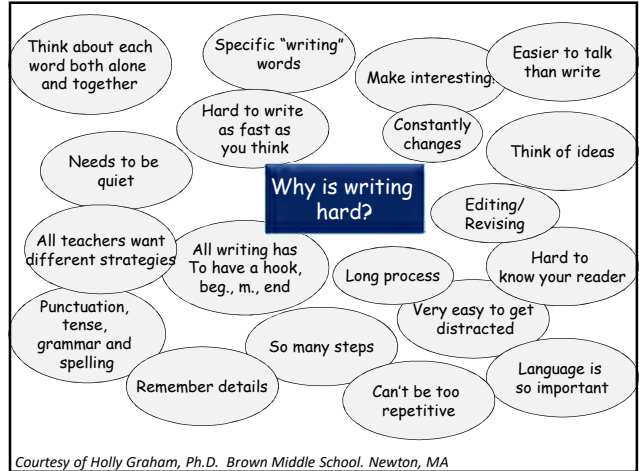
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**To truly understand why  
 students struggle,  
 stop testing them.  
 Just ask them!**



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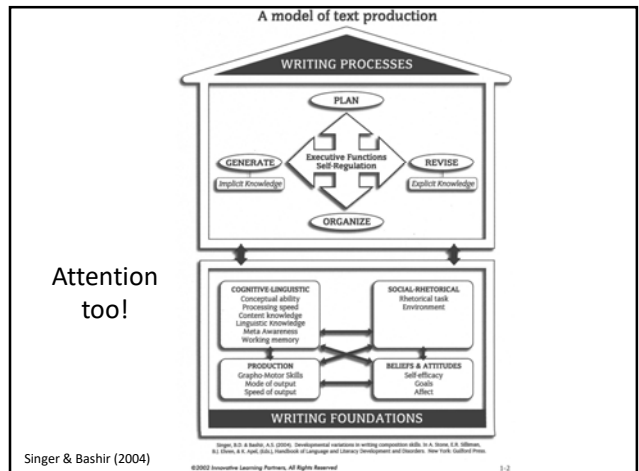
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“Language poses multiple problems for education because it is both curriculum content and learning environment--both the object of knowledge and a principal means through which other knowledge is acquired.”

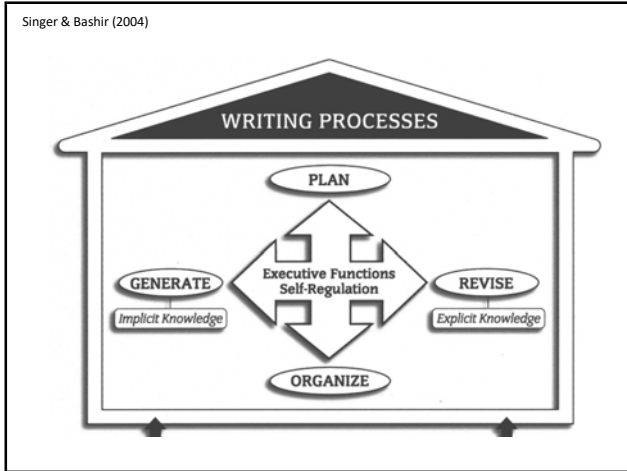
**LANGUAGE**

Cazden, C (1978)

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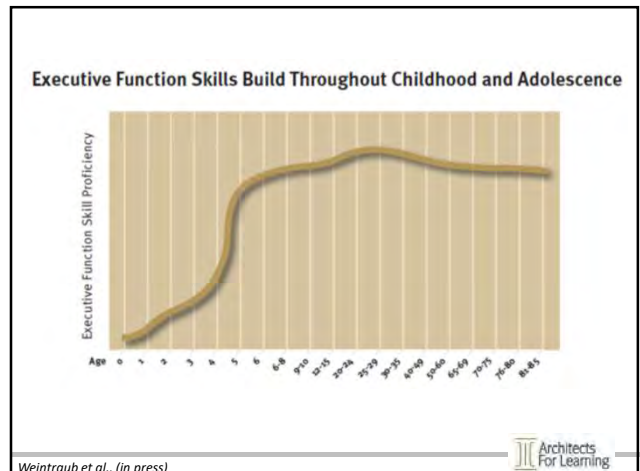


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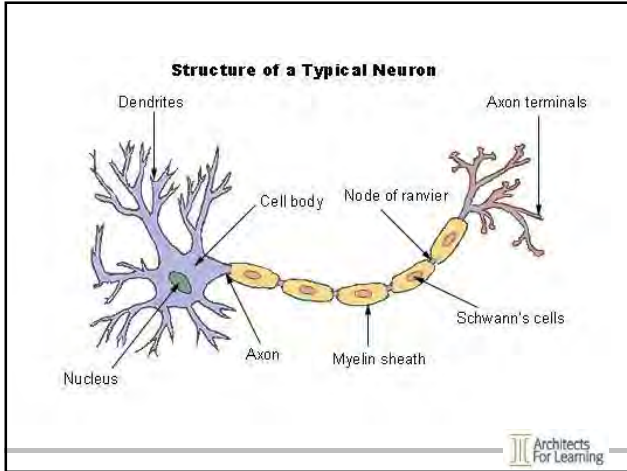
### Executive Functions

Task management	Self-regulation
Planning	Inhibiting off-task behavior
Working memory	Focusing attention
Organizing ideas, behavior, & materials in time	Maintaining optimal levels of emotional & cognitive arousal
Sustaining attention & work	Multiple domains: <i>emotion, behavior, cognition, motor, language, engagement</i>
Self-monitoring	
Flexibility	

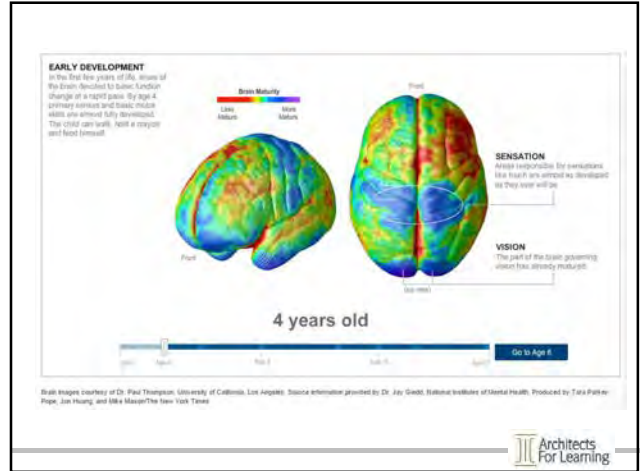
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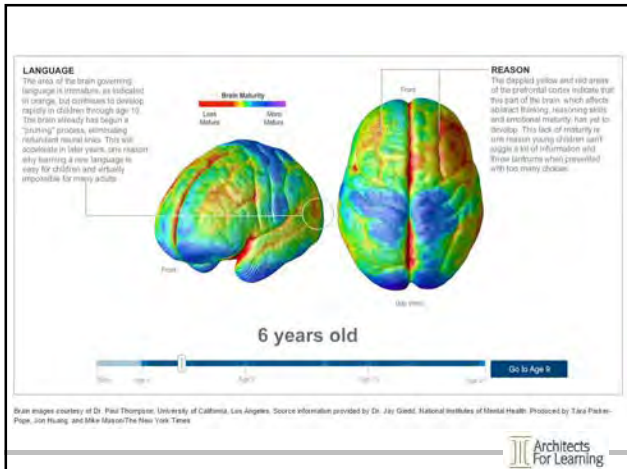
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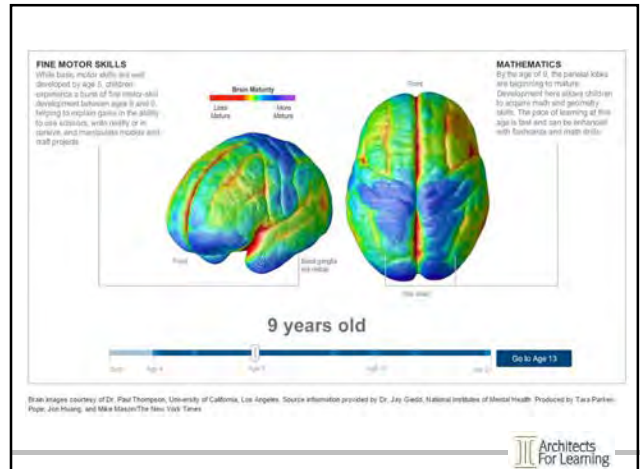
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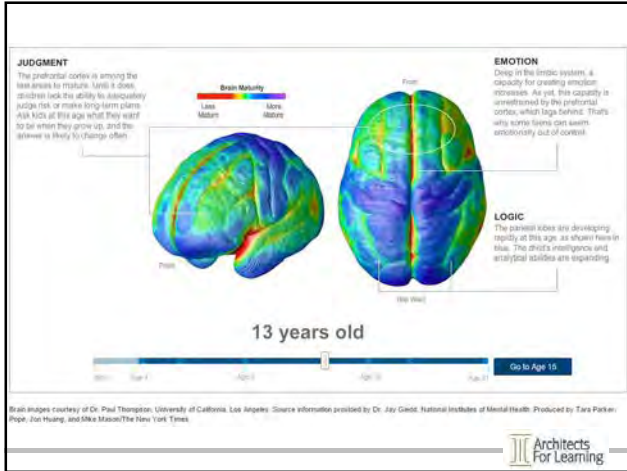
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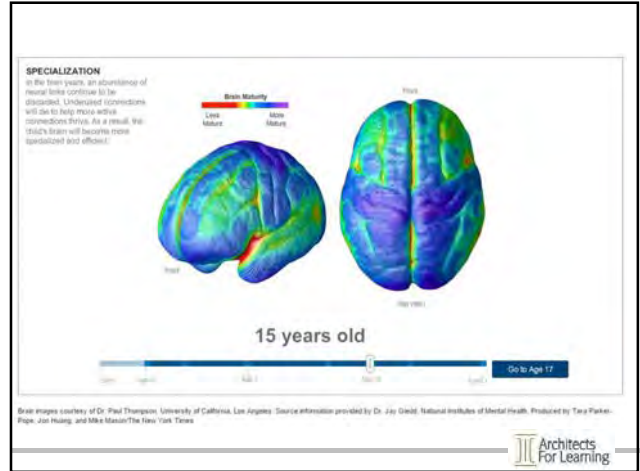
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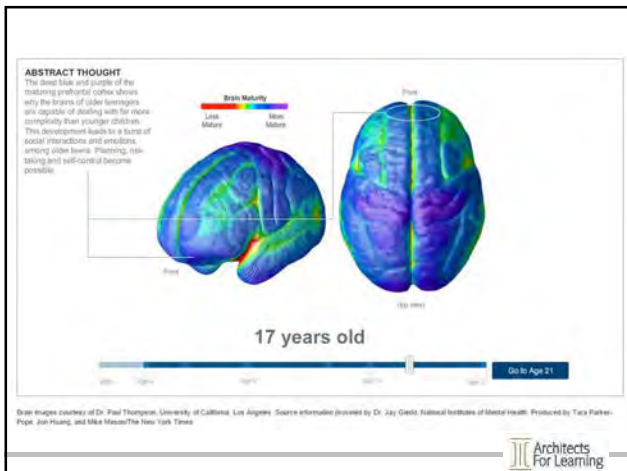
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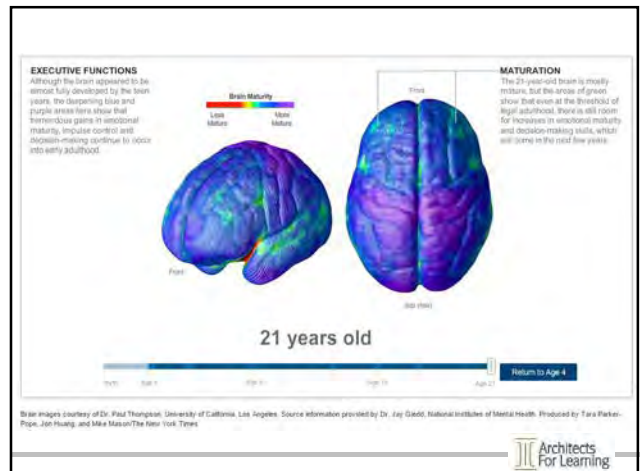
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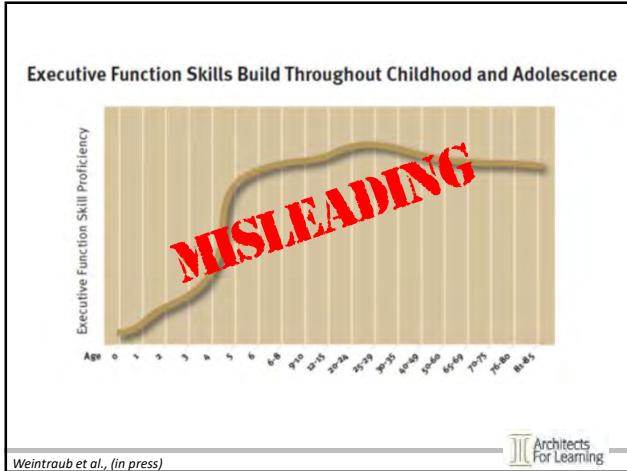
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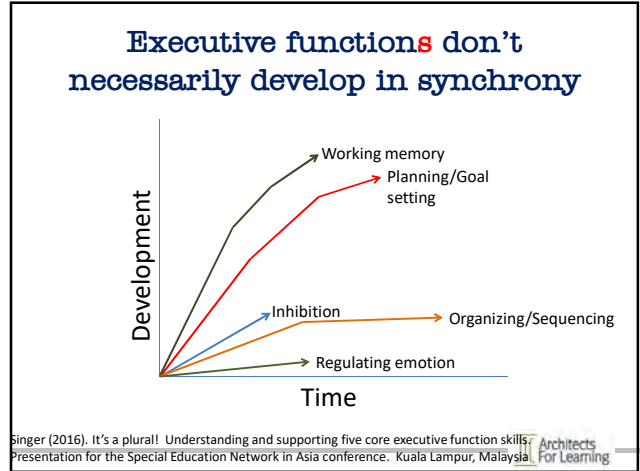
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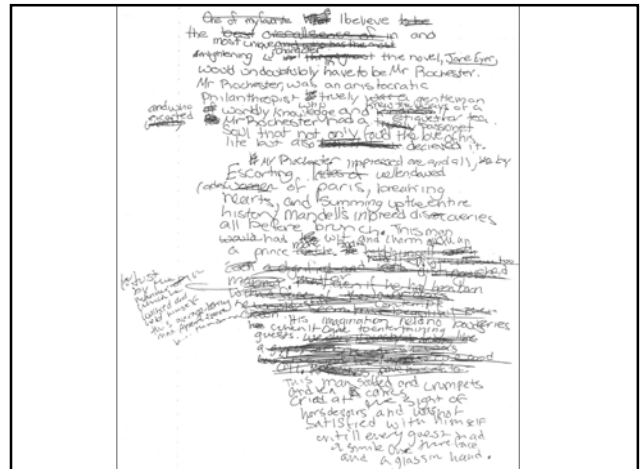


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Executive Functions are minimally engaged when responses are practiced, smooth, or automatic

**Talking and writing are NEVER automatic**

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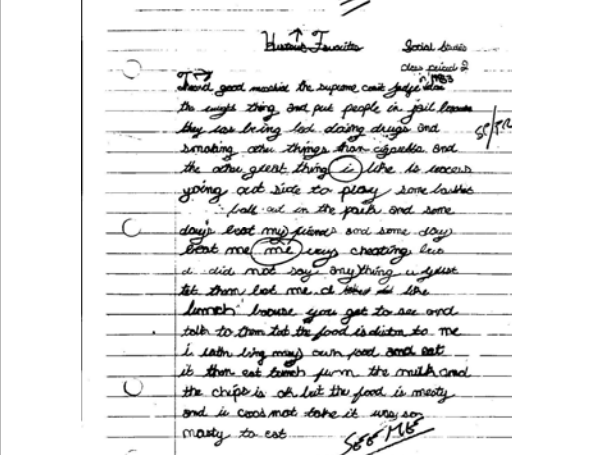
### "A JUGGLING ACT"



A difficult and/or precarious situation in which several things are being attempted or must be maintained at the same time.

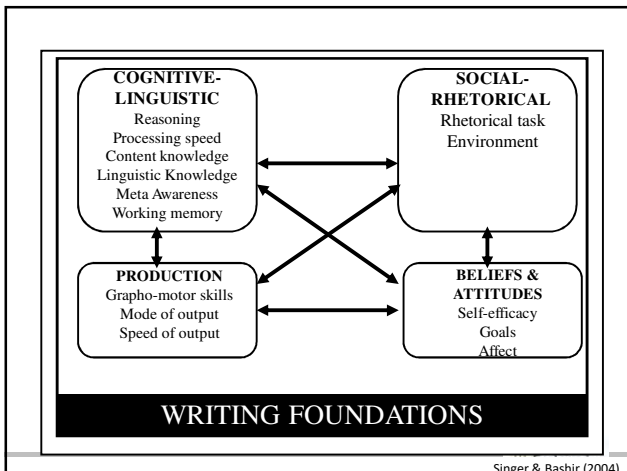
<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/a+juggling+act>

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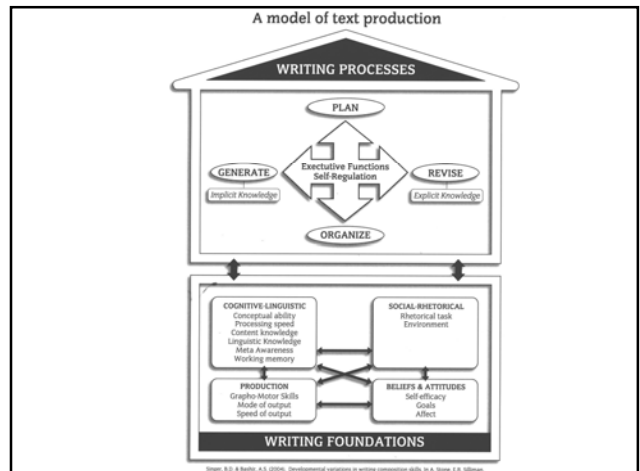


Handwritten text illustrating a student's struggle with writing, showing a messy and difficult-to-read paragraph.

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Different kinds of writing demand varying amounts and kinds of executive and self-regulatory control

- Diary or journal entry
- What I did on my summer vacation
- Our visit to the zoo
- A comparison of the early Jamestown settlements
- F. Scott Fitzgerald and his era as reflected in *The Great Gatsby*

Singer & Bashir (1997)




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Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987)

**“To pay conscious attention to handwriting, spelling, punctuation, word choice, syntax, textual conventions, purpose, organization, clarity, rhythm, euphony, and reader characteristics would seemingly overload the information processing capacity of the best intellects.”**



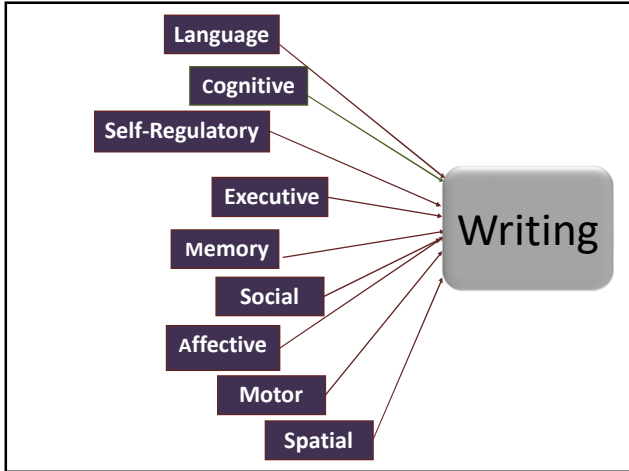
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### Writing requires an expert air traffic controller

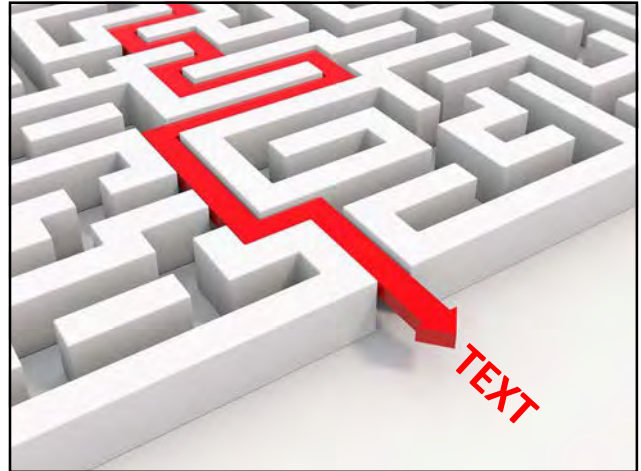


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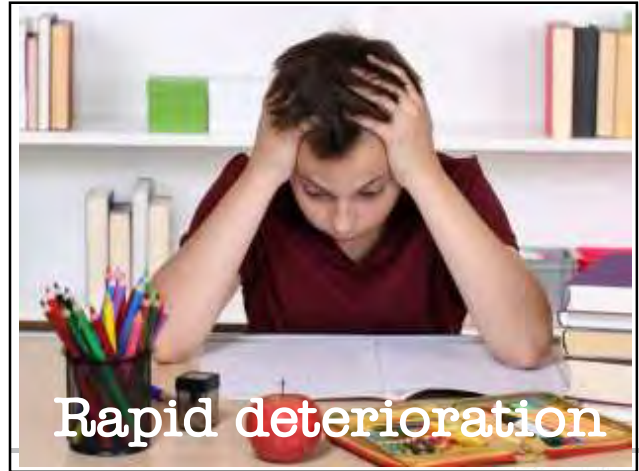
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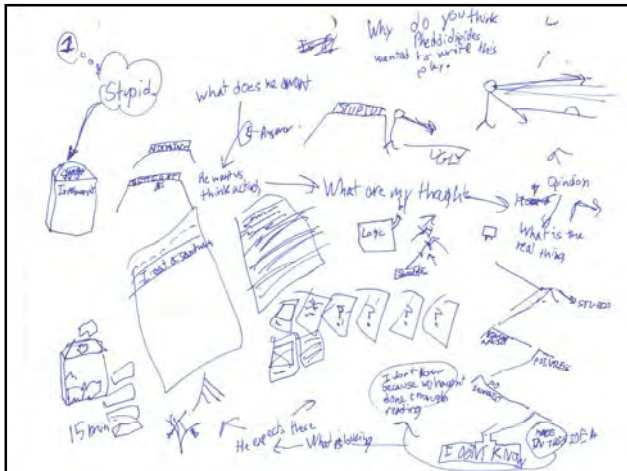
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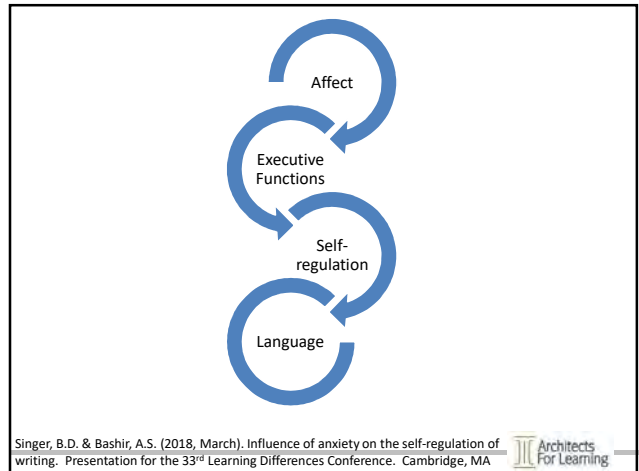
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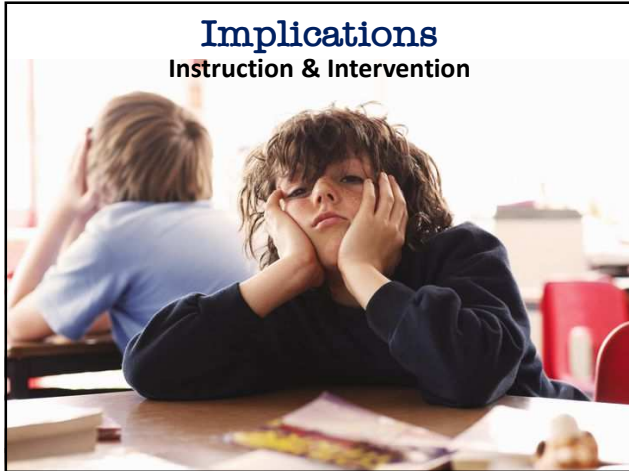


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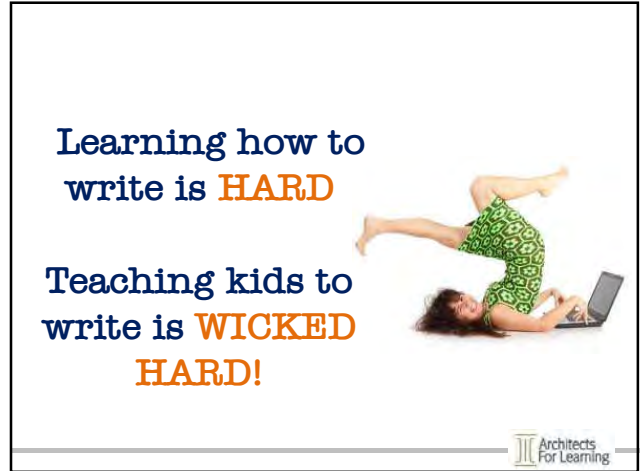


Singer, B.D. & Bashir, A.S. (2018, March). Influence of anxiety on the self-regulation of writing. Presentation for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Learning Differences Conference. Cambridge, MA





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**E**valuate..... 

**m**ake a

**P**lan..... 

**O**rganize..... 

**W**ork..... 


**E**valuate..... 

**R**ework..... 

Singer, B.D. & Bashir, A.S. (2004)

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Explicit teaching of  
the process  
and  
the patterns of language




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**Explicit teaching involves:**

Demystifying the **sequence of steps** a writer goes through to produce text

Revealing **how language works** to make meaning

- Organizational patterns (word, sentence, text)
- How those vary for different writing purposes

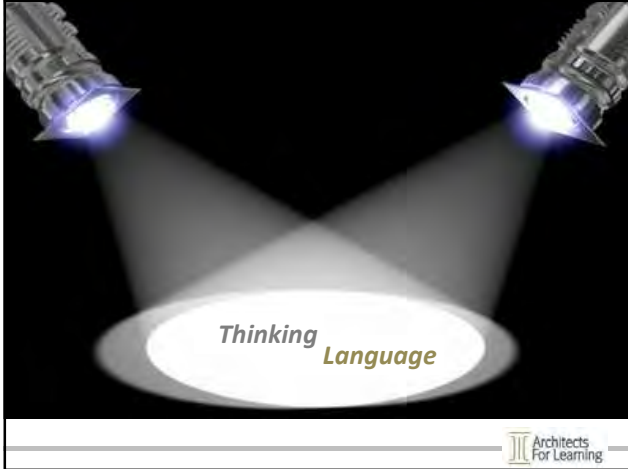


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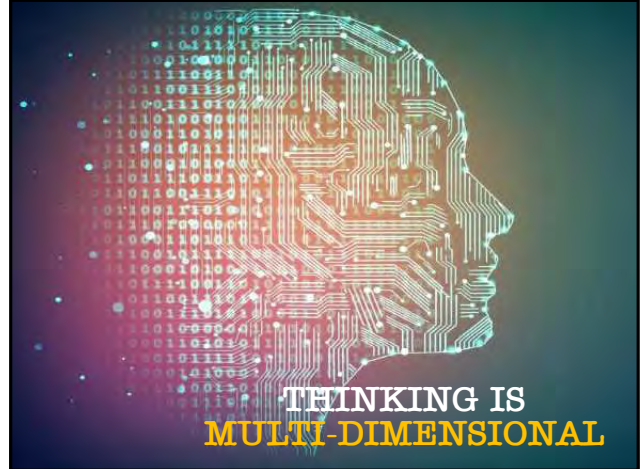
**Make the  
invisible visible**



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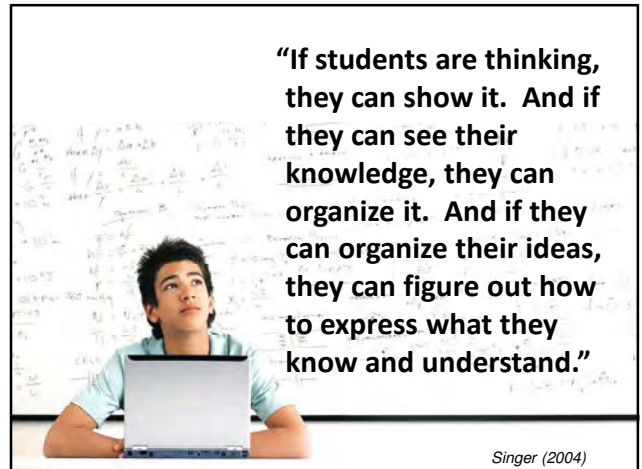
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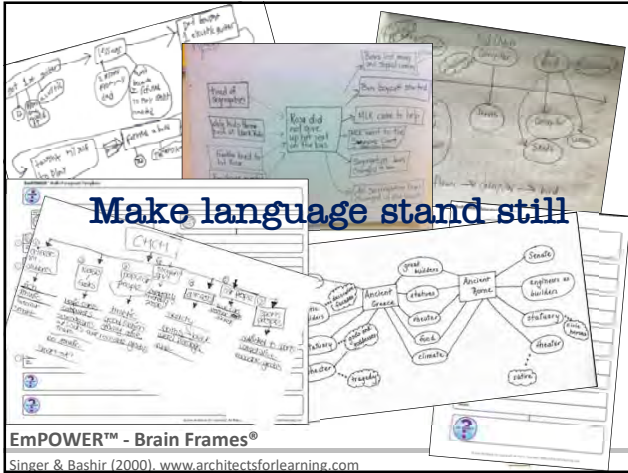
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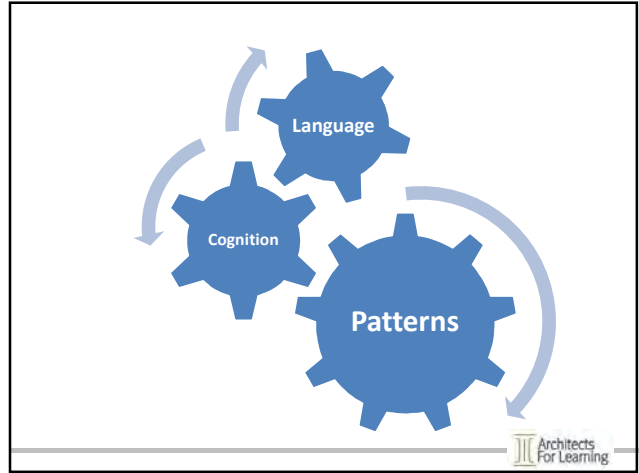
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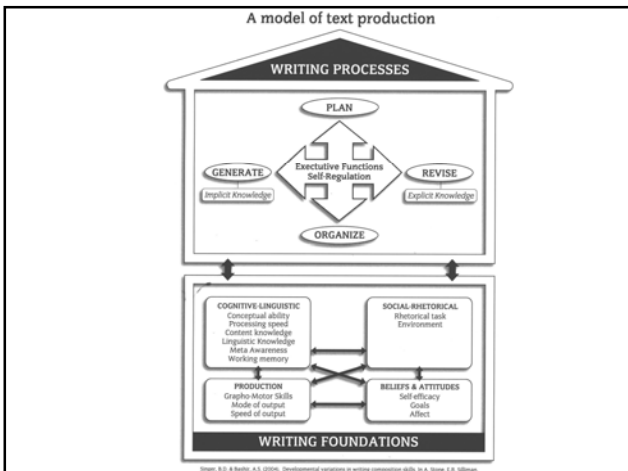
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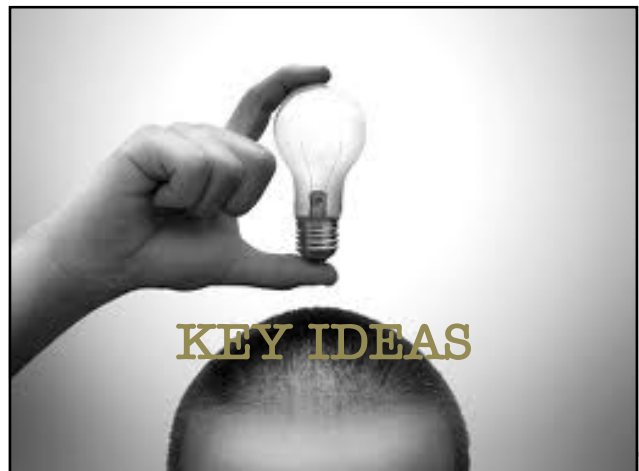
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- 1. Writing demands the synchronous coordination of several cognitive, linguistic, motoric, social, and affective abilities**
- 2. Weaknesses in any of these areas have the potential to constrain the composing process and the production of text**
- 3. Because of its complexity, multi-disciplinary assessment of writing difficulties is warranted**
- 4. Students who struggle need explicit instruction in the step-by-step process of composing and many facets of language.**



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## Suggested Readings

- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011). *Building the brain's "air traffic control" system: How early experiences shape the development of executive function: Working paper no. 11.*  
<http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>
- Diamond, A. (2013). *Executive functions*. *Annu Rev Psychol.*, 64, 135-68.
- Schmoker, M. (2018). *Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA.
- Singer, B.D. & Bashir, A.S. (2004). Developmental variations in writing composition. In A. Stone, E. Silliman, B. Ehren, & K. Apel, (Eds.), *Handbook of Language and Literacy: Development and Disorders*. New York: Guilford Press.



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- Singer, B.D. & Bashir, A.S. (1999). What are executive functions and self regulation, and what do they have to do with language-learning disabilities? *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, 30, 265-273.
- Singer, B.D. & Bashir, A.S. (1997, November). *Executive functions in the writing performance of students with LLD*. Presentation for the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association Convention. Boston, MA.
- Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.



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